

THE RIGHT OPPOSITION

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THE RIGHT OPPOSITION

The Lovestoneites
and the
International
Communist
Opposition
of the 1930s

ROBERT J. ALEXANDER

Contributions in Political Science, Number 54



GREENWOOD PRESS

Westport, Connecticut • London, England

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Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data

Alexander, Robert Jackson, 1918—

The right opposition.

(Contributions in political science; no. 54 ISSN 0147-1066)

Bibliography: p.

Includes index.

1. Communism—History. 2. International Communist
Opposition. 3. Communism—United States—1917—

4. Lovestone, Jay. I Title. II. Series.

HX40.A548 320.532'09 80-1711

ISBN 0-313-22070-0 (lib. bdg.)

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Library of Congress Catalog Card Number: 80-1711

ISBN: 0-313-22070-0

ISSN: 0147-1066

First published in 1981

Greenwood Press

A division of Congressional Information Service, Inc.

88 Post Road West, Westport, Connecticut 06881

Printed in the United States of America

10987654321

To Dick Birnberg

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Preface

My interest in the subject of this book is of long standing. I first met Jay Lovestone in 1935 at the New York City headquarters of the Communist Party (Opposition), when he granted me a short interview. I was a leader of the Young People's Socialist League (YPSL) in northern New Jersey but was considering possibly joining some other radical organization. On balance, however, I decided to stay with the YPSL and the Socialist Party. Several years later, as a leader of the YPSL at Columbia University, I worked closely in the Youth Committee Against War with the local leader of the Lovestoneite Youth.

In later years I had much closer association with Lovestone. On six occasions I travelled to Latin America for him, first when he was secretary of the Free Trade Union Committee of the American Federation of Labor and then when he was head of the International Committee of the AFL-CIO. I reported extensively to him on the trade union and general political situation in various Latin American countries.

During those years and subsequently, I talked with Jay Lovestone about his experiences as leader of the Communist Party of the United States and as head of the Opposition Communist Party of the U.S.A. He was never very anxious to talk about his past but occasionally was willing to talk a little about the earlier aspects of his career.

Over the years I also had contacts with other people more or less closely associated with the International Communist Opposition (ICO). These included Bertram Wolfe, second man in the ICO affiliate in the United States; Joaquín Maurín and Julian Gorkin, leaders of the Partido Obrero de Unificación Marxista of Spain; and Boris Goldenberg and Richard Lowenthal, onetime youth leaders of the German Communist Opposition.

Also, in the process of my research during the last thirty years, I have on

various occasions studied aspects of the international Communist movement. I have published books on Communism and Trotskyism in Latin America, the Communist Party of Venezuela, and articles on various dissident Communist groups in the United States, including the Lovestoneites.

For some time it has seemed to me that it would be useful to have a study of the International Right Communist Opposition. Although it did not survive the 1930s, during that period it was one of the three major factions of International Communism and was more important than the Left Opposition of Leon Trotsky, in terms of the size and influence of its parties and of their geographical distribution. It seemed important for such a study to be undertaken while it was still possible to obtain information from surviving leaders.

This book deals with the Lovestoneites in the United States on the one hand and with their counterparts in other countries and the group to which they all belonged, the International Communist Opposition, on the other. The emphasis of the study is determined in part by the sources of information available. In the United States there is a great deal more data concerning the Lovestoneites than about most of their overseas counterparts. Although I have been able to gather information from a considerable variety of foreign sources about the national Opposition Communist groups, I have been forced to depend most of all upon publications of the American affiliate of the ICO and upon onetime leaders of the United States Opposition as sources for the present volume.

One comment on nomenclature is in order. I have frequently referred to the United States Communist Opposition group as the "Lovestoneites." It is the name by which they were commonly known by members of other radical groups at the time, and they themselves sometimes used it, although usually putting the name in quotation marks. In addition, the group changed its official name three different times, but were always known as Lovestoneites.

I owe a variety of debts to people who helped me collect the material used in this book. Those with whom I corresponded and talked are listed in the bibliography. I thank them all. Since my knowledge of foreign languages is confined to the Romance tongues, I owe thanks to my Rutgers colleague, Dr. Herbert Rowan, for translating some German material for me. Of course, I owe a debt of special gratitude to the editor of this book, Marie Smith, of Greenwood Press. Every author owes much to the person who puts his manuscript into readable shape.

Finally this book owes much to my wife, Joan P. Alexander, who not only bore with me while I wrote it but also carefully edited the manuscript.

Rutgers University
New Brunswick, N.J.
November 1979

THE RIGHT OPPOSITION

Introduction

Throughout most of the first decade of the history of the Communist International, its member parties were riven by factionalism. This arose from arguments over doctrine and policy as well as from raw struggles for power. At its inception the Comintern attracted a wide variety of organizations and individuals. A few of these were real Bolsheviks, as that term was understood in Soviet Russia. However, others were left-wing or pacifist-minded Social Democrats, who approved of the Bolsheviks' opposition to World War I, or who were captivated by the prospect of a totally Socialist government which was apparently pushing towards a Socialist revolution. Still others were anarchosyndicalists who, for a short while at least, saw the Bolshevik regime as a working-class government, worthy of support of all revolutionary labor movements.

The Russian leaders of the Communist International and those foreigners most closely associated with them were anxious to create a Comintern in their own image. Much time and energy of the officials of the Communist International was spent mediating quarrels among factions of various national parties and trying to choose the most "Bolshevik" of them to assume leadership.

This process was complicated by the factional struggle taking place within the Soviet Communist Party, which began even before the death of Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, during his lifetime the virtually unchallenged first among equals of the Soviet leadership. There were three phases in this factional struggle in the Soviet party: the attempt of the "First Troika" of Stalin, Zinoviev, and Kamenev to prevent succession of Trotsky to the leadership; the alliance of Trotsky, Zinoviev and Kamenev—the "Second Troika"—against Stalin and Bukharin; and Stalin's fight against Bukharin in the 1927-29 period.

Until early 1928 Stalin and Bukharin were joint leaders of the Right within the Soviet party. They defeated the Left with a program calling for continuation of the New Economic Policy (NEP) which had partially restored the market economy, a more or less modest drive for industrialization with major emphasis on light industry, and a long-term effort to convince the peasants of the advantages of collectivized agriculture based on mechanization of Soviet farming. This was in sharp contrast to the Trotskyite position favoring exceedingly rapid industrialization and forced collectivization.

However, once the Second Troika had been defeated, Stalin began to veer towards a position on internal Soviet affairs remarkably similar to that which the Troika had advocated. In international affairs Stalin put forward the idea that the world was faced with a "new revolutionary wave," in response to which the Comintern should adopt an extremely revolutionary position, repudiating efforts at "united front" activities with Socialists and adopting an

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attitude of extreme belligerence towards all elements on the Left which were not Communist.

Bukharin resisted this new turn of Stalin. He opposed drastic escalation of targets in the Five Year Plan for industrialization, and resisted moves towards rapid forced collectivization of agriculture and "class warfare" in the countryside. He also opposed the new line on international affairs, arguing that the capitalist system was still undergoing its post-World War I recovery and that there was no revolutionary wave on the immediate horizon; and that, therefore, policies of seeking united fronts with the Socialists and working within the established trade unions should be continued.¹

With the defeat of the Second Troika, Bukharin had succeeded Zinoviev as chairman of the Communist International. As such, he had very close relations with national Communist Party leaders all over the world. Many of these people supported his point of view on Soviet issues and on the policies of the Comintern. It was the purge by Stalin of those in the parties outside the USSR who remained loyal to Bukharin, or who Stalin thought were loyal to Bukharin, which gave rise to the Right Opposition in the world Communist movement.

The purge of Trotsky's supporters within the Comintern had taken place somewhat earlier. Indeed, national leaders who were ultimately to be part of the Right Opposition took a major role in removing Trotskyists from the various national Communist parties.

The showdown between Stalinists and Bukharinites came just before, during and after the Sixth Congress of the Communist International in August 1928. Although the "accepted wisdom" is that the Sixth Congress marked the general adoption by the Comintern of Stalin's "Third Period" position of extreme sectarianism, such was not in fact the case. Although equivocal statements were inserted in the documents of the Sixth Congress which Stalin was later able to use to justify his superrevolutionary position, the basic documents of the meeting in fact reflected principally the more moderate position of Bukharin.

Theodore Draper has suggested that simple differentiation between the "rightist" position of Bukharin and the "leftist" one of Stalin is an oversimplification. He has pointed out that as head of the Comintern Bukharin had started a "left turn" before his break with Stalin. He has noted that "The misunderstanding has come from the fact that there were two 'left turns'—a Bukharinist and a Stalinist. The former prepared the way for the latter, but this does not mean that they were the same thing." Draper has added that "the same words could be interpreted to mean different things or could be applied to different situations. When this happened, the Bukharinists drew back in dismay. They started something which they were not prepared to finish, at least as Stalin finished it."² Draper has concluded that "The Sixth World Congress fell somewhere between the positions of Bukharin and Stalin and

therefore assumed a basically transitional character." Draper has also commented on Bukharin's somewhat equivocal position at the Congress:

As in a Greek tragedy, Bukharin himself said and did the things which paved the way for his own destruction. He identified the Right Wing as the "greatest danger" in the Comintern, so that Stalin had only to identify Bukharin himself as the Right Wing in the Russian Party. He compromised himself by accepting Stalin's premise of a third period, but redefined it in such a way that it seemed like a continuation of the second one. He permitted himself to be so disarmed by the Stalin-controlled discipline of the party that he made no effort to clarify the issues and thoroughly confused his own well-wishers. He assumed responsibility for a policy which he did not believe in, and which doomed him to political annihilation.³

Stalin supporters, both those in the Soviet party and others, used the gathering of most of the world's top Communist leaders at the Sixth Congress to recruit them privately against Bukharin. This was the so-called "Corridor Congress." Immediately after the closing of the meeting, Stalin began a massive offensive against Bukharin within the Soviet party and against his supporters abroad. At this point the factions of the various national parties tended to align themselves with the factions of the CPSU. Stalin began to choose among the various groups within the national parties, supporting those factions ready to back him and removing those he suspected of being Bukharinists. By early 1930 Stalin had thoroughly purged the Comintern of all elements which were not ready and willing to do his every bidding. From then on the Communist International and all the parties affiliated with it were completely under the control of Stalin.

Communist Factions of the 1930s

During the 1930s the international Communist movement was divided into three well-defined groups. One was the Communist International dominated by Stalin. This was the "official" Communist movement, and we refer to it as such in this volume. There were also two "opposition" Communist groups: the Trotskyites, who first formed the International Left Communist Opposition and then in 1938 transformed that into the Fourth International; and the Right Opposition gathered together in the International Communist Opposition (ICO). It is this element with which the present volume is concerned.

Aside from disagreements on ideological and policy issues, one basic element differentiated the Left and Right Oppositions. Trotsky and his followers closely tied their quarrels with Stalin and the Comintern to Stalin's policies in the Soviet Union. The Right Opposition, in contrast, although they had been allies of Bukharin in the Comintern, generally refused to merge their criticisms of the Comintern with Bukharin's objections to Stalin's policies in the USSR.

Indeed, one of the ICO's principal objections to Stalin's Communist International was its insistence on carrying over to the international Communist movement the factional quarrels within the Soviet Union. During most of its existence, the ICO supported the policies of Stalin within the USSR: the Five Year Plans, collectivization, labor policies, political organization, and foreign relations.

The International Communist Opposition

At one time or another there were Right Opposition parties in at least fifteen countries. These were the United States, Canada and Mexico in the Western Hemisphere; Great Britain, France, Spain, Switzerland, Germany, Austria, Hungary, Norway, Denmark, Sweden, and Finland in Europe; and India in Asia. Although these parties did not all exist concurrently, during their lifetimes they were brought together in the International Communist Opposition.

In this volume we shall deal with all those parties which clearly belonged to the ICO as well as those which had fraternal relations with it. In one case we have included a party which conformed to the pattern of the ICO but had no association with it that we can trace. Together all of these constitute the Right Communist Opposition of the 1930s.

Basic Quarrels with the Comintern

The Right Opposition had several basic differences with the Stalinist Communist International and its affiliates during the Third Period, from 1929 to 1935. One fundamental quarrel was over the united front. Under Stalin the Comintern repudiated the idea of "united front," that is, a temporary alliance of the Communists with Socialists and even (depending on the circumstances) with anarchists and other Left labor groups. (The CI had supported the united front during most of the 1920s.) Instead of the united front, the Comintern advocated a "united front from below," whereby Communists would only seek united action with rank and file members or very low-ranking leaders of other parties for the purpose of turning them against their leaders. As the Right Oppositionists pointed out, the united front from below was tantamount to no united front at all.

An outcome of the antiunited front position of the Comintern was the theory of "social fascism." Under this theory the Comintern divided the world political scene into three simple groups: the Communists, the only true revolutionaries; the fascists, all groups to the right of center, including not only real fascists but conservatives of all shades; and the social fascists, all groups on the left which were not Stalinist Communists. The social fascists

were the Communists' worst enemies and the Communists' principal attack should be directed against them. The Oppositionist Communists strongly opposed this line, arguing that the first enemy to be fought was fascism and that Communists should join with Socialists and all labor movements to confront it.

There was also a quarrel over the attitude to be adopted towards the organized labor movement. Stalin imposed on official Communists the policy of withdrawing their followers from existing trade unions (usually under Socialist control) and organizing separate Communist-dominated dual unions. The argument was that since Socialist and other non-Communist union leaders were social fascists, "the worst enemies of the working class," Communists could not remain in organizations controlled by them.

In 1934-35 the Comintern, again under Stalin's direction, jettisoned the antiunited front, social fascism, and dual union policies of the Third Period. However, the line Stalin substituted for these was not any more acceptable to the Communist Oppositionists. The policy of the Popular Front, begun in France late in 1934 and confirmed by the Comintern in its seventh and last congress in the summer of 1935, was opposed by the Oppositionists. Although they had advocated temporary alliances with Socialists and other "proletarian" elements, the Right Oppositionists were strongly against extending this idea as the Stalinists did in the Popular Front, to alliances with "bourgeois" Left elements such as the French Radicals, Spanish Republicans or the New Deal supporters in the United States.

Disagreements over the changes in "tactics and strategy" adopted by Stalin after 1934 thus continued to impede the reunification of the Stalinists and Oppositionists which the ICO sought to achieve. However, there were other more fundamental issues which separated these two factions of world Communism. These can be separated into the theory of "exceptionalism," Soviet party domination of the Communist International, and the issue of internal Communist Party (and Comintern) democracy. These issues were closely related and were essentially part of the same problem.

The idea of "exceptionalism" was particularly advocated by the United States Oppositionists, the Lovestoneites, but was also put forward by other Opposition parties and by the International Communist Opposition. The theory of exceptionalism was that there was uneven development in the various capitalist countries, and Communist policy in each individual nation had to be adapted to the peculiar circumstances of that country. There had to be flexibility and adaptability in any general lines of policy adopted by the Comintern. It should be principally the leaders of the national Communist parties who would be charged with adapting general CI policies to their respective countries.

Closely associated with this line of reasoning was the idea that policies of the Comintern should not be decided only by the leaders of the Communist

Party of the Soviet Union. The ICO constantly protested against the "monopoly" of the CPSU in determining policies and activities of the Communist International. The ICO and its affiliates claimed that the Soviet party leaders who dominated the International judged all issues in the various non-Soviet national parties as a function of the factional disputes within the CPSU. They argued that in place of unilateral Soviet control there should be a truly international leadership of the Comintern, of representatives of the various national parties, fully cognizant of conditions in their respective nations and authorized to speak for the leaderships of their national parties.

The third fundamental demand by the Oppositionists of the Communist International under Stalin was their insistence that "internal democracy" be restored to the Comintern and its parties. They argued that the "real democratic centralism" of Lenin should be restored to the international Communist movement: there should be freedom for those opposed to the policies being followed by individual parties and by the Comintern in general to express their objections without being expelled. Although they must be required to carry out policies agreed upon, they must also be free within the party to criticize and try to change the policies with which they disagreed.

ICO Support of Soviet Internal Policies

Throughout most of its existence the International Communist Opposition sought to differentiate its quarrels with the policies and practices of the Communist International from the factional disputes in the Soviet party. It frequently expressed support of the idea of "building socialism in one country," an essential element in Stalin's theoretical justification for his policies. (This was perhaps not a break with the Bukharinist tradition, since Bukharin himself had argued that such a phenomenon was possible.) The Communist Oppositionists also backed the "second Bolshevik revolution" carried out by Stalin in 1928 and the cause of his break with Bukharin. They frequently praised the Five Year Plans and accepted virtually without question the "miracles" which Stalin claimed were being carried out through those plans. They accepted virtually without any discussion the policy of collectivization of agriculture. They did not question the "liquidation of the kulaks as a class," or the war which Stalin waged against the Soviet peasantry. They also defended the "real democracy" which existed in Stalin's Soviet Union during the early 1930s and even accepted the first phases of the Great Purge begun by Stalin after the murder of Kirov, the Leningrad Communist Party leader, in December 1934, the second phase of which began with the first of the famous "Moscow Trials" in the summer of 1936.

The Communist Oppositionists also defended Soviet foreign policy during most of their existence. "Defense of the Soviet Union" was one of the major articles of faith of the International Communist Opposition and its member parties.

The Concept of Communist Opposition

Fundamental to the creed of the International Communist Opposition and its affiliates was the idea that they were "Communist Oppositionists." It was not a political group in competition with the Communist International and its national parties, but rather, was a "faction" of the international Communist movement, outside of the Comintern for reasons beyond its control, and anxious to return to the Communist International when and if the CI's policies were changed and the ICO members could advocate freely the positions which they supported.

The author remembers a conversation with Jay Lovestone in 1935, which Lovestone undoubtedly does not recall, in which the CPO leader set forth this notion. He explained it by saying that it was not possible to set up a rival to the Second or Third Internationals, because such an organization would have no mass base. The Second International had its mass following in the trade union movements of the European countries; the Third International had its fundamental support in the Soviet Union. Without either a mass trade union base or Soviet backing, another international left-wing group would have no chance of success or even survival.

This theory that it was an "opposition" faction of the Comintern was the major element of controversy within the International Communist Opposition. It led to the withdrawal of the ICO affiliates of Sweden and Norway and is probably the main explanation for the fact that the Bloque Obrero y Campesino of Spain remained a sympathizer rather than an active member of the ICO. It led to major splits in the Communist Opposition groups in Germany and the United States.

The Final Evolution of International Communist Opposition

Only in the last three years of its existence (1938-40) did the Right Opposition finally break with the idea that it was an "opposition" group within the Communist movement. In that period they finally joined forces with the so-called "centrists," who during most of the 1930s had been advocating establishment of an international organization in competition with the Socialist and Communist Internationals.

Several factors influenced the Communist Opposition in making this decision. One was the obvious impossibility of reforming the Communist International. The Communist Oppositionists finally became convinced that the control of Stalin over the Communist International was absolute and that he had no intention of allowing any individual or group to challenge his rule or to question whatever policies he might impose on the Comintern.

Another factor was the purges Stalin carried out in the Soviet Union

between 1936 and 1938. Although they supported the first Moscow Trial, the Communist Oppositionists were not able to accept Stalin's version of the later ones or his much more widespread elimination without public trials of leaders of the Bolshevik Revolution and the Soviet regime. The last straw was the third Moscow Trial early in 1938 in which Nikolai Bukharin was the principal accused.

A third element which convinced Opposition Communists that they had nothing in common with Stalin and his supporters was the behavior of the Stalinists during the Spanish Civil War. The Stalinists sought to establish their own dictatorship in Republican Spain, eliminating all political groups which stood in their way, starting with the Partido Obrero de Unificación Marxista, the Opposition Communists' counterpart in Spain.

As a result of these events, the Communist Oppositionists finally abandoned the idea that they could "reform" the Communist International. Consequently, they were convinced that it was necessary to develop a new international organization of "revolutionary socialists" which would reject the "reformism" of the Socialists and the subservience to Stalin of the Third International. By that time, however, it was too late.

Why the Right Opposition Did Not Survive

Unlike Trotsky's International Left Communist Opposition, the Right Opposition did not survive World War II. The logical question is why these two spin-offs from the Communist International had such different histories. Although there is no absolutely certain answer, clearly one part of the answer is that Trotsky was thrown out of the Soviet Union, while Bukharin (except for two short visits to Britain and France on official business) stayed in the USSR. Trotsky was, therefore, free during the 1930s not only to theorize about what was happening in the "Workers' Fatherland" but also to widely disseminate his theories. He first developed the theory of "Thermidor," that is, the idea that with the ascension to power of Stalin, the Bolshevik Revolution had suffered the same kind of reverse that the French Revolution did with the death of Robespierre and the ascension of the Directorate. Then, he coupled this theory with the argument that the "fundamental conquests" of the Bolshevik Revolution, that is, nationalization of the land and virtually all other means of production and distribution, continued and that, therefore, the USSR remained a "workers' state" albeit a "degenerated" one.

After the triumph of Hitler, Trotsky gave up hope of reforming the Communist International and advocated the forming of new Communist parties in various countries, including the Soviet Union, and the establishment of a new Fourth International. Furthermore, he called for a "political" revolution in the USSR, although not a "social" one, since Soviet society continued to be fundamentally sound. Trotsky argued that with the triumph of Stalin, the

"bureaucracy" had taken control of the Soviet regime, but he never was willing to concede that the bureaucracy was a new ruling class. It could not be such, because it did not own any means of production and distribution—the classical Marxist definition of a ruling class, according to Trotsky.

Thus, Trotsky and his followers were in the somewhat paradoxical position of having given up the idea of reforming the Comintern and its national parties, while at the same time remaining in essence a Communist Opposition group. They continued to insist that the fundamental tenets of Leninism—the vanguard party concept, democratic centralism, the dictatorship of the proletariat—were valid, but had merely "degenerated" under Stalin. Even though Trotsky himself was killed by Stalin only a bit more than two years after Bukharin's execution, he had been able to put forth a body of doctrine which long after his death could rally people who wanted nothing to do with Stalin but felt themselves loyal to the Bolshevik Revolution.

In contrast, Nikolai Bukharin was not free to theorize about what was going on around him—or if he did theorize, he was certainly not free to publish his ideas. Perhaps had he been able to do so, he might have led his erstwhile followers away from the "Communist Opposition" concept earlier and more completely than Trotsky ever did his. He might also have influenced his followers to become critical of internal policies of the Stalinist regime much earlier than they did. Bukharin's ideas about the evolution of the Soviet Union were more fundamentally different from those of Stalin than were the theories of Trotsky. In the controversies of the mid-1920s he had put forth a program for slow conversion of the peasantry to the benefits of collectivization, which would have been made manifest by an industrialization program first stressing consumer goods and agricultural equipment. The peasants would be made to see that collectivization and large-scale mechanization would bring them much higher incomes which they could spend on the consumer goods being produced by industry.

Bukharin, like Trotsky, never challenged the essential elements of Leninism. However, his belief in a relatively decentralized society, continuing for a long time to maintain elements of the market economy, was qualitatively different from the kind of extremely centralized state and planned economy advocated both by Trotsky in the mid-1920s and Stalin thereafter. Had Bukharin been able publicly to draw conclusions about what was happening after 1928, his theorizing might have led in quite different directions from those of either Stalin or Trotsky. However, whatever Bukharin may have thought and written in theoretical terms about what was happening never was made public. He was in no position to draw to himself or to his theories a group of followers outside of the Soviet Union.

Furthermore, once Bukharin had apparently "surrendered" late in 1929, his erstwhile followers abroad sought to dissociate themselves from him and particularly from his ideas concerning the evolution of Soviet society. They

confined their "opposition" to the Comintern and its affiliated non-Soviet parties and accepted more or less verbatim what the Stalinists were saying about what was happening in the USSR. However, over the years of existence of the International Communist Opposition, there were many within its ranks who did not approve of this acceptance. Becoming more or less totally disillusioned in the Soviet regime under Stalin, they defected from the ICO, and in most cases went over to the Social Democratic parties. Near the end of the history of the ICO, those still remaining also became completely anti-Stalinist, and in many cases went beyond that to question their belief in Leninism. But they had no body of theory and doctrine of their own to which to turn.

There thus existed the paradoxical situation that although the Right Oppositionists as a group remained loyal to the formal "Communist Opposition" idea much longer than did Trotsky and his followers, when they finally broke with that notion, they went much further than the Trotskyists in repudiating the whole of Marxism-Leninism. Meanwhile the failure of their ideas to evolve and their lack of a theoretician of the caliber of Leon Trotsky led to a splintering of their ranks over the years. The upshot was that by the outbreak of the Second World War, the International Right Opposition had been reduced to a handful of parties and groups. Once Hitler had obliterated most of what remained of the ICO, there was no body of doctrine around which it might have been reconstructed—as Trotskyism was—after the Second World War. The Right Opposition completely disappeared.

Although it lasted little more than a decade, the Right Opposition was a significant part of the history of the worldwide Communist movement. It raised questions within the movement which did not die with the ICO. Its insistence on the right of each party to set its own policies and to adapt general Communist doctrine to the particular circumstances of its country was something which would be revived after the Second World War. It is still an issue of major importance in World Communism.

In addition, the Right Opposition's questioning of the basic ideas of Marxism-Leninism during its last three years of existence was also something which did not end with the liquidation of the International Communist Opposition. The Yugoslav, Italian, Spanish, and even French Communists have in recent years asked many of the same questions of themselves that the Right Opposition asked just before the Second World War. Thus, an understanding of the history and evolution of the International Communist Opposition in the 1930s may shed considerable light on the evolution of the World Communist movement half a century later.

Virtually from its establishment the Communist Party of the United States (CPUSA) was wracked by factional struggle. During most of the 1920s this was characterized by disagreements on policies to be followed in the United States and by personal rivalries among leaders of the party. By the end of the decade the factions within the CPUSA had aligned themselves with rival groups within the Soviet party and the Communist International. This fact was directly responsible for the formation of the Communist Opposition in the United States.

In the last half of the 1920s there were three factional groups within the CPUSA. One was headed by William Z. Foster, an exleader of the Industrial Workers of the World, organizer of the steel-workers' strike of 1919, and head of the Communists' trade union arm, the Trade Union Educational League (TUEL). The second group was headed, until his death early in 1927, by Charles Ruthenberg, secretary general of the party, and seconded by Jay Lovestone, generally regarded as the principal tactician of the faction. The third was led by James Cannon. These factions were destined to go in three different directions insofar as International Communist politics were concerned.

The Origins of the United States Communist Opposition



Factional Fighting in the Late 1920s

Until 1925 the Foster and Cannon groups were members of the same faction. Max Shachtman, in later years the first lieutenant of James Cannon, defined the original difference between the Foster-Cannon and Ruthenberg-Lovestone groups: "In our group, the Foster-Cannon group, we had pretty well the general view that the Lovestone group . . . was composed of intellectuals, of New York intellectuals, whereas the Foster-Cannon group represented the proletarian elements in the party, the native elements in the party, and to a large extent this was true . . . so far as the composition of the leadership is concerned, that was largely true." However, as Shachtman indicated, this distinction tended in time to disappear. He commented that, "in the subsequent development of the fight this distinction was no longer the characteristic of the contending groups. The Lovestoneites succeeded, with the help of the Communist International, in weaning away one after another the trade union followers of Foster."¹

Irving Howe and Lewis Coser have also commented on the nature of the factions of the late 1920s:

It would be foolhardy if not impossible to present the two main Communist factions as committed all through the twenties to distinct ideological platforms that were sharply demarcated from each other. Anyone examining the details of their struggle will notice that they frequently seemed to shift sides. . . . By and large, the Foster-Cannon group had a greater sensitivity and a closer relation to the American union movement than the Ruthenberg-Lovestone group. In general, the Foster-Cannon group, with much of its strength in the Midwest, was a bit more indigenous in its political style, while the Ruthenberg-Lovestone group was somewhat more faithful or at least alert to signals from Moscow. Yet exceptions to these categories are easy enough to find. . . . Principle and careerism became fatally mixed; the clarity for which the historian wistfully yearns is not available in life.²

At the 1925 Fourth Congress of the Communist Party, the Foster-Cannon faction held a slim majority. However, the Comintern intervened, through Sergei Ivanovich Gusev, who Theodore Draper has called "the most important Russian Communist ever sent by the Comintern on a mission to the American Communist movement."³ He received a cable from the Comintern which started with the comment that "It has finally become clear that the Ruthenberg Group is more loyal to decisions of the Communist International and stands closer to its views."⁴ The result was that the Ruthenberg-Lovestone group was assured leadership of the American party. Max Shachtman commented that "Even the imposition—the imposition by decree of the new leadership of the party in 1925—was pretty well swallowed by the great majority of the party. And Foster, who tried in a very restrained way to set himself against this decision, was almost overnight beaten back. The idea of

fighting the Communist International was considered absolutely sinful and heretical,—also fruitless.”⁵

However, the events of the 1925 congress did bring about the separation of James Cannon and his followers from the Foster caucus. The three-way split in the party leadership was to continue for about three years. Cannon mobilized those members of the Foster faction who were willing to go along with the decision of the Comintern. For the time being, therefore, Cannon and his colleagues formed an alliance with the Ruthenberg-Lovestone faction.⁶

With the death of Charles Ruthenberg in March 1927, Jay Lovestone was the undisputed leader of what had been the Ruthenberg-Lovestone faction. He had for some time been the third man in that group, after Ruthenberg and John Pepper, a Hungarian Communist “exiled” to the United States as a means of solving a faction dispute in the Hungarian party. However, by the time of Ruthenberg’s death Pepper had been recalled to Moscow.

Max Shachtman has given a sketch of Lovestone as he was seen by his factional opponents. Most comments on Lovestone have come from his opponents rather than his friends, but Shachtman’s comment is relatively objective:

He was intellectually and politically very alert. He could think on his feet, so to speak. He was a very able factional captain. Next to Pepper, there’s no question that he was the one who masterminded the factional strategy of his group; and after Pepper went back to Moscow, it was Lovestone’s group. That’s all the more the case because Ruthenberg died in 1926 I believe. And Lovestone became the undisputed leader of their faction and the party itself. No, intellectually I would say, if I understand rightly what you mean by this term, I think Lovestone was the superior of Ruthenberg by far. From the standpoint of personal character, we at least of the Foster-Cannon opposition. . . . Let me put it this way, we felt that there was no comparison between the two. From the standpoint of character and probity, Ruthenberg was by far and incomparably the superior to Lovestone . . . it was considered that Lovestone would stop at nothing in the factional fight, that no method, no procedure was too strong for him to adopt.⁷

After Ruthenberg’s death an attempt was made to keep Lovestone from being elected secretary general, but he succeeded in getting the issue postponed and having himself named acting secretary general,⁸ and the issue was referred to Moscow, where it was dealt with by the Eighth Plenum of the executive committee of the Comintern. Stalin gave a three-hour interview to the members of the Lovestone faction attending the Plenum, and Lovestone also had long consultations with Nikolai Bukharin, chairman of the Comintern.⁹ The Eighth Plenum’s American Commission decided that, pending the next convention of the CPUSA, Jay Lovestone and William Z. Foster should both be secretaries of the party, but with Lovestone as first secretary.

The party convention, meeting early in September 1927, gave a complete victory to Lovestone. He became executive secretary and his supporters took charge of the party's publications as well as the Organization and Agit-Prop departments of the party. Ten of the twelve district organizers positions were given to Lovestoneites. Theodore Draper has commented on these changes that "Never had Ruthenberg or Foster been able to wield such power as Lovestone did in 1927. Never had Foster and Cannon suffered so disastrous defeat or seemed so far from a comeback."¹⁰

James Cannon, an inveterate enemy of Lovestone, has confirmed albeit somewhat ungraciously, Draper's judgment: "The Lovestone faction, now headed by Lovestone, perhaps the least popular and certainly the most distrusted man in the party leadership, this time accomplished what the same faction formerly headed by the popular and influential Ruthenberg had never been able to do. Lovestone won a majority in the elections to the convention and established the faction for the first time in real, as well as formal, control of the party apparatus."¹¹

For the next two years the Lovestone faction dominated the United States Communist Party. However, after a little more than two years its control had been liquidated, the faction itself had been split, with part of it capitulating to its erstwhile opponents, the rest being expelled from the Communist Party. This absolute debacle after such an apparent triumph was basically caused by international events rather than anything within the United States Communist Party itself.

The Americans at the Sixth Congress

The beginning of the end of Lovestoneite dominance of the CPUSA came during the Sixth Congress of the Communist International in Moscow in August 1928. The United States Communist Party delegation became actively involved in the sub-rosa conflicts taking place at the Sixth Congress. The Lovestoneites, led by Jay Lovestone himself, supported Bukharin. James Cannon, on the other hand, as became clear soon after the end of the Congress, was won over to the positions of Leon Trotsky during the Moscow meeting.¹²

Lovestone had for several years worked closely with Bukharin. The two men had first met during Bukharin's short residence in New York in 1916-17, although it was not until later that they became good friends and political allies.¹³ As for their relationship in the 1920s, Theodore Draper has noted that "Bukharin admitted him into his intimate circle. . . . Lovestone's increasingly frequent trips to Moscow had forged a bond of personal friendship and political sympathy between them. Other Americans noticed that Lovestone had begun to displace Pepper as Bukharin's chief adviser on American affairs."¹⁴

At the Sixth Congress, Lovestone became very disturbed by the surreptitious campaign being carried on against Bukharin among the delegates. He therefore demanded a meeting of the informal "Council of Elders," composed of heads of delegations, to discuss the problem. As Jay Lovestone himself remembered the meeting, its main feature was a strong denunciation of him for having had the audacity to call such a session.¹⁵ Theodore Draper had noted that Stalin, on behalf of the Soviet delegation, officially told the Council of Elders that there was no controversy within the Soviet leadership. Draper added that "Since the differences existed, as Stalin later admitted, Lovestone's action hardly helped to endear him to Stalin."¹⁶ It is also to be supposed that Stalin did not appreciate Lovestone's quarrels in the congress with A. Lozovsky, head of the Red International of Labor Unions, and an important supporter of Stalin. Draper has noted that "Lovestone and Lozovsky staged some of the most riotous brawls of the congress. Never before had an American Communist dared to make such insolent attacks on a high Russian leader."¹⁷

The Lovestone group was not entirely unaware of Stalin's attitude towards it. Ben Gitlow had succeeded in purloining some secret documents of the Foster faction, including a "two page single-spaced letter from Foster telling about a private confidential interview he had with Stalin." As Gitlow wrote, "The letter made some startling disclosures. Foster claimed . . . that Stalin informed him that Bukharin was a Right Winger and supported the Right Wing elements generally in the Communist International. He told Foster that that accounted for the support which Bukharin gave to the Lovestone group. . . . He further let Foster know that he was ready to support him in the American Party."¹⁸

However, no moves were taken against Lovestone or his group at the Sixth Congress. An attempt by anti-Lovestone elements among the United States delegation to get the congress to issue an open letter to the American party leadership (which some thought had actually been written by Stalin),¹⁹ urging it to change its line, came to naught. Furthermore, Lovestone was elected, along with two other Americans, Foster and Gomez, a full member of the executive committee of the Comintern, while Ben Gitlow was chosen as "candidate member" of that body. The most bitter opponents of Lovestone, Bittelman and Johnstone, were not included in the new top organization of the Communist International.

Theodore Draper has noted that:

It is clear in retrospect that the Sixth World Congress should have warned Lovestone that his fences in Moscow needed mending desperately and without delay. It is equally clear that he failed to take the warning signals seriously. He based his optimistic judgment of the Congress on Bukharin's retention of nominal leadership, the official denial of disagreement among the Russians, the rejection of American Opposition's demand for a critical open letter, the mildly worded American section of

the theses, and the appointments to the Comintern's highest top committees. . . . Formally, Lovestone emerged the victor from the congress. But the struggle for power in the Russian party and in the Comintern was not governed by formalities.²⁰

Will Herberg argued that the alignment of Lovestone with Bukharin at the Sixth Congress was not opportunistic, was not because Lovestone felt that Bukharin was going to win the struggle obviously going on in the Soviet party. Rather, he insisted, Lovestone's support of Bukharin came from the fact that the two men agreed fundamentally on the major political issues then at stake.²¹ Bukharin's regard for Lovestone was shown by his invitation to him to stay in Moscow after the congress. He told Lovestone that the Comintern was full of dead rot and that he needed someone who would stay there and fight. Lovestone refused the invitation, saying that he had to get home to run a presidential election campaign. The party had nominated William Z. Foster for president, so Lovestone's reply brought a hearty laugh from Bukharin, who commented that Lovestone would not want Foster elected even if that were possible. Lovestone agreed.²²

The Struggle Back Home

The factional struggle within the CPUSA was renewed with increasing intensity after the return of the U.S. delegates from Moscow. One of the most spectacular events was the expulsion of James P. Cannon, Max Shachtman and Martin Abern as Trotskyites. Cannon had brought home with him a copy of a document, "Criticism of the Draft Program," which Trotsky had submitted to the Sixth Congress, and which had received limited circulation there. Cannon was convinced by the document of the correctness of Trotsky's analysis and began to let some of his close associates read it.²³ The apparent conversion of Cannon and his friends to Trotskyism resulted in their being put on trial before a joint meeting of the political committee and the control commission in October 1928. Charges of Trotskyist heresy were actually brought against Cannon and the others by Foster, fearful of the effect that any association with Trotskyism might have on him, due to his long on-again off-again factional alliance with the Cannonites. The trial lasted several days, and the accusers had very slim evidence upon which to base their charge. However, as Cannon wrote, he and his colleagues finally "decided to bring the thing to a head. I got up and read our statement of allegiance to the Russian Opposition, which was printed on the first page of Volume 1, Number 1 of *The Militant*. We were expelled and out of there a few minutes later. The 'jury' didn't bother to leave the box."²⁴

Once Cannon and the others had been expelled, Lovestone, as secretary general, insisted that every district organization endorse the action and that all who refused to vote for such a motion be suspended or expelled. Merely

abstaining would bring a penalty. As a result, the Minneapolis party group, headed by the Dunne brothers, was driven out of the party and joined the new Trotskyite group.²⁵

Howe and Coser have commented on Lovestone's purge of the Trotskyists: "The viciousness of the campaign which he developed against them surpassed anything before known in the American radical movement. Jack Stachel, chief assistant in Lovestone's less savory projects, planned and led a raid upon the private apartments of the Trotskyist leaders, rifled their files. . . . Trotskyist newspaper vendors were attacked by party agents and savagely beaten. Cannon's meetings were disrupted and his women comrades publicly called whores."²⁶

These events certainly had a depressing effect on the anti-Lovestone forces. So did a Comintern telegram of September 7 saying that "the charge against the majority of the Central Committee of the Party representing a Right line is unfounded."²⁷ However, all was not to be smooth sailing for the Lovestone faction. A further telegram from the Comintern dated November 21 criticized the way Lovestone had publicized the earlier one. It noted that "this formulation could easily lead to the interpretation that the Congress has expressly declared its confidence in the majority. . . . But this is not so."²⁸

This second message was dispatched two days after a Soviet party plenum at which Stalin had denounced the "Right danger" in the CPSU, naming as part of it several close aides of Bukharin, but not him personally. Thus, the changed attitude towards the U.S. party was clearly part of a broader onslaught by Stalin.

Lovestone, sensing changing winds from Moscow, decided to send Bertram Wolfe as his American party representative to the Comintern. Wolfe arrived in the USSR early in January 1929. At a meeting of the Executive Committee Wolfe, very sick as the result of an abscessed ear, fainted, but at least for the time being succeeded in getting postponed an open letter hostile to the Lovestone group which the Comintern was proposing to send to the American party.²⁹

During the period between the end of the Sixth Congress of the Comintern and the Sixth Convention of the CPUSA in February 1929, the majority conformed on a number of points to the new policies coming from Moscow. Against their better judgment they began establishment of dual Communist-controlled unions. They cautiously supported another position being imposed by Stalin, by publishing (in February 1929) a resolution of the Comintern's political secretariat of October 26, 1928, on the Negro question, which read "While continuing and intensifying the struggle under the slogan of full social and political equality for the Negroes, which must remain the central slogan of our Party for work among the masses, the Party must come out openly and unreservedly for the right of Negroes to national self-determination in the southern states, where the Negroes form a majority of the population."³⁰

However, Lovestone did not at that point dissociate himself from either Bukharin or John Pepper, both of whom were being pushed aside in the International by Stalin. Indeed, at a plenum of the party in December 1928, Lovestone proclaimed his faith in Bukharin: "For me he does not represent the Right wing of the Communist International; although for some he does. For me Comrade Bukharin represents the Communist line, the line of the CEC of the CPSU. Therefore, Comrade Bukharin is an authority—of the C.I." As Theodore Draper notes, "Years later, Lovestone added some details not in the official record of the plenum and attributed his downfall to this meeting."³¹ At this same plenum, faced with rumors of a split between them, Lovestone and Pepper issued a joint statement that since 1922 they had "always been working together politically very closely," and that they "shared the same views."³²

The Sixth Convention of the CPUSA

The Lovestone faction had an overwhelming majority at the Sixth Convention of the Communist Party which met in February 1929. Of the 104 delegates, 95 were of that faction. On most points, the Lovestoneite leaders were able to keep their followers in line during a difficult convention. In addition to the American delegates, there were two representatives from the Comintern, Philipp Dengel of the Thaelmann group of the German Communist Party, and Harry Pollitt of the British party. They brought two documents: an open letter on political issues and certain confidential "organizational proposals." Of the former Draper has written:

This Open Letter made clear that the Comintern no longer supported the Lovestone regime; it did not make clear what other kind of regime the Comintern wished to support in its stead. The main emphasis was placed on "the absence of substantial differences on points of principle" between the two factions to justify a struggle of such length and intensity within the party—an ironic commentary on the subsequent charge that Lovestone had long represented a major Right Wing deviation. Every criticism of one faction was carefully balanced with a criticism of the other faction. The Open Letter concluded with a four-point program which called for liquidating factionalism and drawing workers into the leadership.³³

Although the experience must have been a painful one, the Lovestone group "accepted" the Comintern's political suggestions in the open letter. However, they refused to take without protest the organizational "proposals" which called for William Z. Foster to become general secretary and for Jay Lovestone and Alexander Bittelman, Foster's chief lieutenant, to go to Moscow to work for the Comintern. At a factional caucus Lovestone was able to convince all but one member of the faction to reject these changes. Theodore Draper has noted that "For the first—and last—time in the history of Ameri-

can Communism, a convention was deliberately organized to disobey the Comintern and to flout the wishes of its authorized representatives."³⁴

In an effort to get Stalin to change the Comintern's mind on the organizational issue, the Lovestone leadership had a group of "worker" delegates to the convention send a cable to him, asking Stalin to have the suggestions reversed. Stalin replied in what Draper calls "a historically unique document—the only message ever sent by him personally to the American Communists."³⁵ In it Stalin relented to the point of allowing the convention to choose its own central committee, but reiterated that Lovestone and Bittelman had to come to Moscow to work there. He also insisted on immediate return of John Pepper to Moscow and that there be a review of the decisions of the convention by the Comintern.

On the basis of Stalin's cable, the convention then proceeded to elect a new central committee of forty-four members, "the vast majority of them pro-Lovestoneites." The new central committee then chose a political committee composed of ten Lovestoneites and four of the opposition. Benjamin Gitlow was made head of the executive department of the party, Max Bedacht, at the time a Lovestone supporter, head of Agit-Prop, and Foster was renamed trade union secretary.³⁶

The only major issue of the convention on which Lovestone was unable to keep his caucus in line was opposition to a formal condemnation of Bukharin, who by that time had been removed as head of the Comintern. The anti-Lovestone faction made a major issue of this, which finally "set off a stampede in Lovestone's steering committee, which consisted of himself, Bedacht, Gitlow, Minor and Stachel." As a result an all-night caucus meeting was held by the Lovestone group. Ben Gitlow has noted that Dengel told them that "we were slated for removal from the leadership, because in Moscow we were considered supporters of Bukharin and the Right Wing." They could only reestablish themselves, he claimed, "if they made it clear that they were not Bukharinites by denouncing him."³⁷ Even under strong pressure from the Comintern representatives, Lovestone resisted this "as unprincipled and even threatened to resign from the group if it were carried through." However, he was finally dissuaded and he and Ben Gitlow "introduced the resolution denouncing Bukharin and suggesting that he should be formally ousted from the leadership in the Comintern."³⁸

The American Commission

Although apparently in total command of the U.S. Communist Party after the February 1929 convention, the Lovestone faction was out of the party within eight months. The fact was that they lost in Moscow what they had won in New York City.

Bertram Wolfe has explained that when he got to Moscow as the U.S. party's representative in the Comintern, he discovered that the American

party leadership's real fight was with Stalin. He therefore "sent home for reinforcements" in the form of a delegation from the U.S. party to discuss the whole situation with Stalin and the other Russian leaders.³⁹ As a result, the sixth convention named a ten-person delegation to go to Moscow, pointedly naming principally "proletarians." The delegation consisted of William Miller, a machinist from Detroit; Tom Myerscough, a miner; William J. White, a steel organizer; Alex Moral, a farm expert; Ella Reeve Bloor, an old-time trade unionist; Otto Huiswoud and Edward Welsh, Negroes; as well as party leaders Jay Lovestone, Ben Gitlow and Max Bedacht.⁴⁰ Charles Zimmerman, a member of the Lovestoneite caucus and a leader of the party in the needle trades, was in Moscow for a meeting of the Red International of Labor Unions textile and clothing workers and attended the meetings between the American and Soviet leaders.⁴¹ Meanwhile, the Comintern had also summoned Bittelman, Foster, and William Weinstone (one of Foster's main lieutenants), and so they, as well as the CPUSA's delegates to the Comintern and the RILU (Wolfe and Harry Wicks), took part in the discussions.⁴²

Suspecting that the worst might happen, Lovestone and the other top leaders who were about to go to Moscow took precautions to prevent their losing control of the party and its property. They provided that the property be transferred to loyal members of the Lovestone faction. They also left Robert Minor, considered a loyal faction member, as acting secretary. However, in the showdown, these steps were to prove absolutely ineffective.

The American Commission, which was set up to listen to the CPUSA representatives and to render a decision for the executive committee of the Comintern, consisted of eight Russians and four others. Its members were Stalin, Molotov, Lozovsky, Manuisky, Gusev, Khitarov, Moireva, and Mikhailov from the CPSU; and Otto Kuusinen, exiled leader of the Finnish party; the Britisher, Tom Bell; the Hungarian, Bela Kun; and the German, Walter Ulbricht.⁴³ Its meetings began on April 13, 1929. Several sessions were held and Stalin made a total of three speeches. These three discourses were never published in Russian, the language in which they were delivered, but only were issued in English.⁴⁴ Stalin's opposition to the Lovestoneite group was obvious from the beginning.

In his first speech on May 6, Stalin set forth ideological deviations on the part of the American party leadership: "It would be wrong to ignore the specific peculiarities of American capitalism. The Communist Party in its work must take them into account. But it would be still more wrong to base the activities of the Communist Party on these specific features, since the foundation of the activities of every Communist Party, including the American Communist Party, on which it must base itself, must be the general features of capitalism, which are the same for all countries, and not its specific features in any given country."⁴⁵

After accusing both U.S. factions of engaging in this kind of error, Stalin said that each faction was speculating on differences within the Soviet party.

The Fosterites were calling themselves "Stalinites," and this was "irresponsible." He then asked, "And how does the Lovestone group act in this connection? Does it behave more correctly than the minority group? Unfortunately not. Unfortunately, its behavior is even more disgraceful than that of the minority group."⁴⁶ Stalin finally asked, "What then is the solution?" and answered his own question thus:

1. The actions and the proposals of the delegation of the E.C.C.I. must, in the main, be approved, with the exclusion from the proposals of those points which approximate to the proposals of Comrade Foster.

2. An open letter must be sent in the name of the E.C.C.I. to the members of the American Communist Party, setting forth the errors of both sections of the Party and sharply emphasizing the question of eradicating all factionalism.

3. The action of the leaders of the majority at the Convention of the Communist Party of America, particularly on the question of Pepper, must be condemned.

4. An end must be put to the present situation in the Communist Party of America, in which the questions of positive work, the questions of the struggle of the working class against the capitalists, questions of wages, working hours, work in the trade unions, the fight against reformism, the fight against the Right deviation—when all these questions are kept in the shade, and are replaced by petty questions of the factional struggle between the Lovestone group and the Foster group.

5. The Secretariat of the Executive Committee of the American Communist Party must be reorganized with the inclusion of such workers therein as are capable of seeing something more than the factional struggle. . . .

6. Comrades Lovestone and Bittleman must be summoned and placed at the disposal of the Comintern, in order that the members of the American Communist Party should at last understand that the Comintern intends to fight factionalism in all seriousness.

Such is the solution, in my opinion.⁴⁷

The representatives of the American Majority did not react to the trend shown in the May 6 American Commission meeting in the manner traditional in the Comintern. Instead of laying down and playing dead, the Lovestone faction representatives issued a statement saying that "the Executive Committee of the Communist International desires to destroy the (American) Central Committee and therefore follows the policy of legalizing the past factionalism of the opposition bloc and inviting its continuation in the future."⁴⁸

The Plenum of the Soviet Party

The sessions of the American Commission of the ECCI were interrupted for several days by a meeting of the Plenum of the Soviet party which required the presence of the Soviet party officials. However, the American delegation became inadvertently involved in the Plenum's business, an involvement which certainly did not help its case before the ECCI. The purpose of the

Soviet Plenum was to put the finishing touches on the removal of Bukharin from all authority within the Soviet party and the Comintern. Bukharin, in defending himself before this session, complained that a deliberate campaign had been waged against him within the International, citing the anti-Bukharin resolution of the American party's recent convention as an example of this, and saying that it had been inspired by the Comintern representative in the United States, Philipp Dengel. For his part, Dengel replied with a statement denying responsibility for the anti-Bukharin resolution, and stating "that it was an example of the unprincipledness of the majority of the American party." Naturally, the American delegation could not accept that version of events and issued its own statement refuting Dengel and pointing out that the anti-Bukharin resolution had been passed at the insistence of Dengel.

Ben Gitlow presented the American Communists' statement to the Russian Plenum. But when it was translated and given to Stalin, the latter "became very angry," and the meeting was adjourned without the CPUSA statement ever being heard. Gitlow attributes this hasty action to the fact that the American statement "was a startling exposure of Stalin's campaign in the International for the extermination of Bukharin."⁴⁹

Renewal of the American Commission Sessions

On the reopening of the sessions of the American commission on May 12, there was presented a draft of an "Address by the Executive Committee of the Communist International to all Members of the Communist Party of the United States." Draper has summarized this draft:

In substance, the draft went much further in its denunciation of Lovestone's regime than either the Open Letter to the Sixth Convention or Stalin's first speech had done. For the first time in a Comintern document, Lovestone and Pepper were identified as the clearest exponents of the theory of American "exceptionalism." This was defined as the belief in a crisis of capitalism, a swing of the masses to the Left, and the necessity of accentuating the struggle against reformism and the Right danger—everywhere except in America. Though both factions were still blamed for the party's faults, the main responsibility was placed on the leaders of the majority and especially on Lovestone personally.⁵⁰

The American delegation was presented with the alternative of saying "yes" or "no" to this document. Jay Lovestone replied that "Whatever work is given me I will do. But we have a deep conviction that such an organizational proposal as the one aiming to take me away from our Party today is not a personal matter but a slap and slam in the face of the entire leadership."⁵¹

During this meeting, Otto Kuusinen, rapporteur for the commission, threatened the U.S. majority delegation, implying that the Lovestoneite faction would find on their return home that they had lost support of the party, and

added the sinister statement that "From your declaration we see plainly that it is no longer a question of factionalism of the leaders of the Majority of the CC against the Minority group, but it is already a factional attitude towards the Executive of the Comintern."⁵² Kuusinen did not entirely understand the degree to which his accusation was correct. Right after this meeting, Lovestone, Gitlow, Bedacht, and Wolfe drew up a cable to their lieutenants in New York, instructing them to put into effect the precautionary measures, including the transfer of party property, that they had prepared for before leaving New York.⁵³

The ECCI Presidium Meeting

The showdown between the Lovestoneite faction of the American party and Stalin came on the evening of May 14, 1929. The Presidium of the Communist International met to receive the report of the American commission, and to act upon it. Stalin took a leading role in that meeting, delivering his second speech on "the American question." Early in his discourse, he denounced the Lovestone group:

Instead of a serious attitude to the matter in hand, and a readiness to put an end finally to factionalism, we have a fresh outburst of factionalism among the members of the American delegation and a fresh attempt to undermine the cause of unity of the American Communist Party. A few days ago we were still without the draft of the decision of the Comintern on the American question. All we had then was an outline of the general principles for a decision, an outline directed toward the eradication of factionalism. But instead of waiting until the draft decision appeared, the American delegation, without wasting words, broke out with the declaration of May 9th, a declaration of a super-factional character, an anti-Party declaration. . . . The draft of the proposals of the Commission, which has now been distributed to all the members of the Presidium of the E.C.C.I. and the American delegation, no sooner appeared than the American delegation broke out with the new declaration of May 14th, a declaration still more factional and anti-Party than that of May 9th.⁵⁴

Stalin then denounced in detail the statements of the Majority group of the American delegation. Subsequent to Stalin's speech, the Presidium voted overwhelmingly in favor of the "Address"; only Benjamin Gitlow voting against it. This formal action was followed by a demand that each member of the American delegation—that is, the ten representatives of the Lovestoneites—get up on the platform and declare where he personally stood on the issue. The psychological pressure upon them was tremendous, faced as they were by an audience of 150 people, including not only the Presidium members, but also "top leaders of many parties and ranking officials of the Comintern and Profintern."⁵⁵ However, "with three exceptions, they answered that they still disagreed with the decision but would accept it as a

matter of discipline until the next discussion period."⁵⁶ The exceptions were Max Bedacht and Alex Moral who, in Draper's words, "broke down" and capitulated, and Ben Gitlow who "declared that not only did he oppose the Presidium's decision but that he would go back to the United States to fight against it."⁵⁷

Stalin's reaction to this defiance was violent. Ben Gitlow says that "Stalin rushed to the platform. I had never seen him so angry before. His reserve was gone, and the low, slow delivery supposedly characteristic of the man, a delivery which he affected, was gone. He burst into a tirade against us. This speech was published later by CPUSA, but not as he gave it, since it was replete with personal abuse and name calling."⁵⁸

In the officially published version of the speech, Stalin was reported to have said that "We ought to value the firmness and stubbornness displayed by eight of the ten American delegates in their fight against the draft of the Commission. But it is impossible to approve the fact that these eight comrades, after their views have suffered complete defeat, refuse to subordinate their will to the will of the higher collective, the will of the Presidium of the E.C.C.I."⁵⁹ Later in his speech, Stalin returned to this theme: "Comrades Gitlow and Lovestone announced here with aplomb that their conscience and convictions do not permit them to submit to the decisions of the Presidium and carry them into effect. The same was said by Comrade Bloor. What they said amounted to this, that since they do not agree with the decision of the Presidium, they cannot submit to that decision and carry it into effect."⁶⁰ Gitlow reported that Stalin ended his tirade by saying that they could go back to America but that "The only ones who will follow you will be your sweethearts and wives."⁶¹

Denouement of the American Commission Sessions

The sessions of the American commission were an unadulterated disaster for the Lovestone leadership. The caretakers left in charge in New York did not take the steps which Lovestone had ordered in the cable written on May 12 and finally sent from outside the USSR on May 15, that is, the transfer of the party property to loyal Lovestoneites. On the contrary, they collapsed, most conforming to the position taken by the Presidium, accepting the "Address," and moving to freeze out their former leaders, who were still in Moscow.

Meanwhile, "the Political Secretariat in Moscow decided to remove Lovestone, Gitlow and Wolfe from all their leading positions, to purge the Political Committee of all members who refused to submit to the Comintern's decisions, and to warn Lovestone that it would be a gross violation of Comintern discipline to attempt to leave Russia."⁶² The Soviet and Comintern leaders sought to keep the principal Lovestoneites in Moscow more or less indefinitely. They offered various jobs to Lovestone, Gitlow, Wolfe, and Ed Welsh within the Comintern apparatus and the GPU. All of these offers were rejected.⁶³

Lovestone was forced to repudiate, in part at least, the position he had taken at the Presidium meeting as the price of getting back his passport. But even after he had his passport, he was not allowed to leave Moscow, on request of the new leaders of the CPUSA, who were afraid to have him back before they had completely "reorganized" the party. However, Lovestone finally succeeded in making arrangements with friends he still had in the Soviet Foreign Office to take a plane out. These arrangements depended upon his getting to the airport at exactly the right time—which he succeeded in doing.⁶⁴

The End of Lovestoneite Control of the CPUSA

Theodore Draper has noted that the ECCI notified the new leadership of the American party that Lovestone had left Moscow.⁶⁵ However, Lovestone has said that those who had taken over the party were surprised when he appeared one afternoon at the party office and said that he was ready to make his report on the Moscow sessions. He was told that he should wait a few days, and they would let him know about the current situation in the party. However, two days later Lovestone read in the *Daily Worker* that he had been expelled from the party.

The new party leaders would not allow Lovestone to take either his personal effects or his documents of many years out of the party office. They claimed several weeks later that the FBI had raided the office and absconded with those materials—an obvious effort to divest themselves of the responsibility for them.⁶⁶

Meanwhile a new leadership had been patched together to take over from the one-time Lovestone majority. Ben Gitlow has described these arrangements:⁶⁷

It was decided that Bedacht and Minor be added to the Secretariat, to maintain the fiction that the majority of the convention was continued as the Majority, but with a difference. A committee of three was to be sent to the United States immediately under the chairmanship of a Russian. Upon their arrival in the United States, the members of this committee were to become members of the Secretariat, with power to vote on all American Party matters coming before the Secretariat. Its authority was broadened to include all political matters, making the new Secretariat of six actually the leading committee of the Communist Party of the United States, three of whose members were put there by Stalin, they having never been members of the American Party.⁶⁷

However, there was even more to the decision imposed by Stalin. Gitlow has noted that "he proposed that the Russian chairman of the committee . . . have plenipotentiary powers over the Secretariat, the Political Committee, the Central Executive Committee and all the districts of the Party." Gitlow has also noted that the new leadership was given by the Russians "an initial sum of

fifty thousand dollars with which to finance the fight" against the Lovestoneites.⁶⁸

Bedacht was made titular secretary general. However, he was not adequate for the job, which in 1930 was turned over to Earl Browder, who continued to occupy the post for fifteen years until ousted on Stalin's orders in 1945. Browder had been a Comintern functionary during the latter half of the 1920s, serving both in Moscow and China. He was a loyal Stalinist.⁶⁹ Bedacht was shunted off to run the Communists' "fraternal society," the International Workers Order, but was finally expelled from the party in 1948.⁷⁰

Jay Lovestone's expulsion was followed by those of virtually all who remained loyal to him. Draper estimates that in all about two hundred people were thrown out of the party, but adds that approximately two thousand others dropped out voluntarily, without necessarily joining forces with the new group formed by the Lovestoneites.⁷¹ The Lovestoneites cited somewhat different figures. They noted in November 1929 that the party had officially stated that 125 people had been expelled, but that the number in fact was 350, and "practically all of these comrades are functionaries." They included these central committee members: C.W. Bixby, leader in the shoe unions; Ellen Dawson, textile union leader; Ben Gitlow; William Kruse, party leader in Chicago; Lovestone himself; William Miller, party leader among auto workers; F. Vrataric, Communist leader among anthracite coal miners; William J. White, Communist steelworker; Bertram Wolfe; and Charles Zimmerman, party leader among garment workers. Ben Lifshitz, another central committee member, had been suspended.

Expelled candidate members of the central committee included: Alex Bail, party leader in Boston; Bert Miller, head of the New York District; Charles Novak, leading Yugoslav Communist; Ed Welsh, Negro member of national executive of the Communist Youth, and Herbert Zam, secretary of the Young Communist League and member of the executive of the Young Communist International. Finally, two expelled members of the party's disciplinary body, the control commission, were J. O. Bentall and M. Nemser.⁷²

Establishment of Communist Party (Majority Group)

By October many expelled Lovestoneites and others who had resigned formed a new organization, the Communist Party of the U.S.A. (Majority Group). They elected a national council and on November 1, 1929, brought out the first issue of their paper, *Revolutionary Age*. Its name was designed to emphasize that the new group contained a substantial part of the founders of the Communist Party—since *Revolutionary Age* had been the name of the paper published in 1919 by the left wing of the Socialist Party, forerunner of the Communist Party.

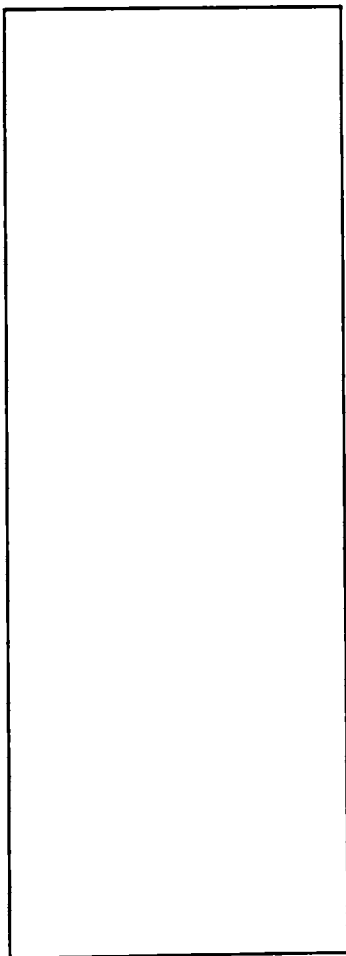
During their more than eleven years of existence as a distinct political group, the Lovestoneites had local affiliates from coast to coast. Although never a large organization, the dedication of its membership, the intensity of their activity, and the high quality of their leadership gained the Communist Oppositionists of the United States influence far beyond what their numbers would seem to justify.

Membership and Local Organizations

The membership of the Lovestoneite group undoubtedly fluctuated over the years. It is exceedingly difficult to get exact data, and perhaps the Communist Opposition leadership itself did not know the exact number of members it had at any given time. The organization lacked the tight discipline and regimentation which characterized the official Communist Party.

Ben Gitlow, in his memoirs, *I Confess*, commented that "We had fully four-fifths of the Communist Party membership with us when we were its acknowledged leaders, yet hardly one percent followed us out of the Party into our American neo-Bolshevik organization,"¹ and added that "The Lovestoneites did

The Organization and Activities of the Lovestoneite Group



not attain a membership in excess of three hundred and fifty throughout my connection with the group."² On the other hand, Will Herberg, who held a leading position in the organization throughout its existence, estimated that at its height the American Communist Opposition probably had between one thousand and fifteen hundred members.³ He commented that the leaders of the group, and particularly Jay Lovestone himself, tended to exaggerate greatly their membership. When Lovestone was asked the rationale for this, according to Herberg, he commented that every other radical group did the same thing, so there was no reason why they shouldn't also do so.

On at least two occasions the Oppositionists received recruits from the foreign language affiliates of the official Communist Party. In February 1933 a number of former members of the Ukrainian National Language Faction of the Communist Party announced that they were joining the CPO, detailing their struggle against Communist Party "sectarianism." This statement was signed by Benny Prut, secretary of the Provisional National Committee of the Ukrainian Communist Opposition.⁴ Almost two years later, the Lithuanian Workers Society, with one thousand members in thirty branches around the United States, joined the International Communist Opposition as a group. Its membership was concentrated among anthracite and Southern Illinois coal miners; silk workers of Paterson, New Jersey, and Easton, Pennsylvania; Pennsylvania steelworkers; and clothing workers of New York City. For practical purposes, they worked as members of the Lovestoneites.⁵

Will Herberg's estimate of Lovestoneite membership would seem nearer to the facts than that of Gitlow. The best evidence of this is the number of local organizations which were affiliated with the Communist Opposition. Information on this was occasionally provided by the group's newspaper. For instance, the May Day 1933 issue of *Workers Age* carried "greetings" from four branches in New York City, plus branches in "Anthracite" (Wilkes-Barre, Pa.), Fort Wayne (Ind.), Boston, Philadelphia, Detroit, Chicago, San Antonio, Los Angeles, Troy (N.Y.), Baltimore, Passaic (N.J.) and Hartford.⁶

The May Day 1938 edition of the party paper carried greetings from branches in Austin (Tex.); Baltimore, Boston, Buffalo, Chicago, Cleveland, Detroit, Fall River (Mass.), Flint (Mich.), Fort Wayne, Frederickstown (Pa.), Hartford, Kokomo (Ind.), Lansing (Mich.), Los Angeles, Muskegon (Mich.), New Bedford, Philadelphia (three branches), Pittsburgh, Pontiac, St. Louis, Spivack (Colo.), and Wilkes-Barre. There were also greetings from nine branches in New York City.⁷

The Oppositionists had some youth members, although New York seems to have been the only city in which the youth had a separate organization within the party. The group consisted largely of students from the New York universities. The youth were considered full members of the Lovestoneite organization and participated in regular party membership meetings. For a while they had their own publication, *Young Communist*.⁸ They spent much of their

energy opposing the official Communists' Young Communist League (YCL). Thus, in January 1936, when the YCL proposed establishment of a youth organization oriented toward socialism but not formally associated with the Communist Party, through merger of the YCL and the Socialist youth group, the Young People's Socialist League (YPSL), the Communist Opposition youth repudiated the idea, saying that it was futile so long as no "full and free decision" was permitted to members of the YCL. As late as 1939 the Opposition Youth distributed pamphlets attacking the Popular Front at a YCL convention.⁹

The Opposition youth were active in the American Student Union (ASU), which from 1935 to 1937 was the principal radical organization among the country's university students. Although never a major political force in the ASU, the Opposition Communists did play a significant role, together with the YPSL, in formation of the Youth Committee Against War (YCAW), established after the official Communists had seized control of the ASU.

Communist Opposition Publications

The Communist Opposition, from its establishment, published a newspaper. The first, *Revolutionary Age*, came out every other week. Ben Gitlow was the first editor, and Bertram Wolfe was associate editor.¹⁰ For a while, the Lovestoneites also published a Yiddish periodical, *Jewish Monthly Bulletin*, which seems to have been short-lived.¹¹ Another Yiddish periodical, *Arbeiter-Kampf*, appeared for a short while in 1933.¹²

In January 1932 the name of the major party publication was changed to *Workers Age*, and although it was a continuation of *Revolutionary Age*, the first issue was numbered Volume 1, Number 1.¹³ The reason for the change was that the U.S. Post Office had objected to the periodical's original name and was threatening not to deliver it to subscribers.¹⁴

Workers Age was periodically faced with financial crisis and continually launched subscription campaigns and appeals for funds. As early as July 9, 1932, the paper carried a headline, "An Issue Skipped! This Must Not Happen Again!" The article urged "special extraordinary efforts to save the 'Age.' " Two weeks later it was announced that the members of CPO had voted a 5 percent summer assessment to help keep the *Age* open through September.¹⁵

Six years later, the financial problem was still with the *Age*. In November 1938 it launched a campaign for thirty-five hundred new subscribers in order to increase the size of the paper and to begin a new theoretical journal.¹⁶ The June 17, 1939 issue carried a half-page appeal for funds on the front page, headed "The Workers Age Is In Danger!" This issue was only two pages instead of the customary four. Again, on July 20, 1940, there was a two-page edition, with a front-page appeal for funds, headed "We Have Missed An Issue—Don't Let It Happen Again!"

Finally, an article on the front page of the September 28, 1940 *Workers Age* headlined "We Are Forced to Retreat," started out, "Beginning with this issue, the *Workers Age* ceases to appear weekly. For the rest of the year at any rate, it will appear bi-weekly, once every other week."

The last issue of *Workers Age* appeared on January 23, 1941, and announced the decision of the Lovestoneites to go out of existence.

For a radical newspaper, *Workers Age* was relatively lively and readable. It was by no means confined to party news and dry theoretical articles. It frequently had art and literary criticism by Bertram Wolfe, usually had a book review column, and for a while had a column by Robert Arthur on "Stage and Screen." Most of its contents, however, consisted of news about the labor movement, news about and official pronouncements by the Lovestoneites, and information about the official Communist Party and other radical groups. There was also considerable polemical material, usually defending the current Lovestoneite points of view, but during periods of internal controversy, reflecting the various points of view within the group.

An article in the November 9, 1935 issue of *Workers Age* summed up the first "six years of achievement." Written by David Scheyer, it admitted that it was sometimes "dreary" to edit the paper, and added, "I suppose to many of our readers it has been a trifle dreary too. The *Age* is a paper small in size and circulation because the complex questions it discusses can appeal to only the most advanced and class-conscious. We do not have 'sensations,' 'exposés,' 'scoops.' Perhaps we could have won a wider audience by keeping closer to the surface of things by playing up the newsy, exciting angles of labor events at the expense of analyses. But that is not the function of the *Workers Age*."

Scheyer noted that he was proud of two political controversies the paper had covered. One was how to approach the Socialists, and it was eventually decided that the winning of Socialists to Communism "was to be solved by comradely discussion and cooperation, not by name calling." The second was how to combat Trotskyism, and the conclusion was that "we believed that the fight should rely on more than slander." As a result, Scheyer claimed, *Workers Age* articles on Trotskyism "contain some of the best material on revolutionary theory and practice that has been produced in the last five years, not only in America but in the world." He added that he was also proud of the fight against dual unionism, the call for rebuilding the left wing in the International Ladies Garment Workers Union, and the support of the trend within the AF of L towards a more progressive attitude.¹⁷

The Lovestoneites also issued internal mimeographed bulletins. These included *Where We Stand*, which was officially a publication of the Communist Party (Opposition) of the United States, and *The Road to Communism*, issued in New York, but in the name of the International Communist Opposition. Jay Lovestone was principally responsible for putting out these internal publications.¹⁸

From time to time the Lovestoneites put out pamphlets intended for wide circulation outside of their own ranks. As many as a dozen such publications were issued during the life of the organization.

In 1935-36 the Harlem section of the CPO put out a monthly mimeographed magazine, *The Negro Voice*, for general circulation. It had articles of special interest to blacks about lynching, the need for blacks to join the labor movement, the historic role of Booker T. Washington, the Emancipation Proclamation, and the Scottsboro and Angelo Herndon cases. It also carried more general material concerning the CPO position on war and "Socialist construction" in the USSR.

Educational Work and Cadre Training

The Lovestoneites pursued organized "educational" activities to inform group members and to recruit outsiders. In the Communist tradition, they also from time to time organized "cadre" training.

The second issue of *Revolutionary Age* carried an announcement of the opening of the Marx-Lenin School, to offer courses on Problems of the American Communist Movement, Problems of the Communist International, Fundamentals of Communism, Program of the Communist International, Work in Trade Unions, American History, America Today, and the History of American Thought.¹⁹ A month later, *Revolutionary Age* carried an article on the new school. It noted that its director was Bertram Wolfe, that D. Benjamin was the assistant director, and S. W. Levitsch was the school's secretary. The article noted that these were the same people who until a few months before had directed the Communist Party's Workers School, and added that most instructors of the new institution had also taught in the Communist Party's school.²⁰ Subsequently the Lovestoneites' school underwent name changes. It became the New Workers School, then the Independent Labor Institute. These changes reflected changes taking place within the CPO itself.

The rationale for the institution was discussed in an editorial entitled "The New Workers School," in the July 18, 1932 *Workers Age*. It noted that "The Communist Party (Majority Group) early realized that one of its great tasks in the present crisis of Communism was to hold aloft the banner of revolutionary Marxist theory in spite of all difficulties, to do its share in counteracting the confusion injected into the advanced section of the working class by the reformism of the Socialists and by the sectarianism of the official Communist leaders, to contribute to the consolidation of circles of class conscious workers equipped with the world upheaval doctrines of Marx and Lenin. It was to carry out these tasks that the New Workers School was founded three years ago."

The editorial added that "the success of the school in the short period of its existence has been slow but gratifying indeed." It reported that "several hundred students" had attended the courses given during the third year of the school's existence, and that fifty students, the great majority of whom did not belong to any organized Communist faction, were then attending a special summer session.

So long as the Lovestoneites continued to consider themselves an integral part of the world Communist movement, the courses offered at the party school reflected their orthodox Marxism-Leninism. They dealt with such subjects as "Fundamentals of Communism," "Dialectical Materialism," "History of the Labor Internationals," and "Basic Conceptions of Marxism." Jay Lovestone regularly gave a course entitled "Current Events." Instructors were usually leading figures of the group resident in or near New York.

However, during the last three years of the group's existence, as the Lovestoneites ceased to consider themselves orthodox Communists, the nature of the courses at the school changed. For example, in the spring term of 1939, the Independent Labor Institute offered a course entitled "American Socialism Today." It also offered a course on "The State of American Civilization," which was opened by Norman Thomas, with James Rorty, Benjamin Stolberg, Nathaniel Minkoff, Lewis Corey, Ludwig Lore, Horace Coon, Will Herberg, and Bertram Wolfe as the other speakers.²¹ Of these, only Corey, Herberg, and Wolfe were Lovestoneites.

In addition to the New Workers School-Independent Labor Institute, which was intended in part to attract outsiders, the Lovestoneites sometimes ran special courses to train key members of the group. For example, in August 1935, *Workers Age* reported that thirty people were brought to New York from Boston, St. Louis, Baltimore, Chicago, Cincinnati, Toronto, Montreal and other cities for a three-and-a-half week full-time training session. The group included miners, teachers, needle trades workers, textile workers, shoe workers and auto workers. They were given concentrated courses in trade unionism, Marxism-Leninism. Marxian economics, History of American Communism, Methods of Teaching Fundamentals of Communism, Critique of Radical Tendencies in the Labor Movement, Revolutionary Traditions in American History, and International Affairs. There were also special lectures on the "Negro Question" and the student movement. The instructors included Lovestone, Bert Wolfe, Will Herberg, D. Benjamin, Eve Dorf, George Miles, and Charles Zimmerman.²²

Leadership of the Lovestoneite Group

The leadership of the Lovestoneite group was relatively stable throughout the eleven and half years of its existence. Although a few early leaders died during this period, and a few others defected during the splits of the early 1930s, the leadership as a whole remained largely intact.

The first issue of *Revolutionary Age*, on November 1, 1929, noted that an enlarged session of the national committee of the Communist Party (Majority Group) had recently met, and had elected a national council to lead the organization. Its members were: A. Bail, Lazar Becker, J. O. Bentall, D. Benjamin, W. Bixby, S. Cohen, Ellen Dawson, I. Gallant, P. Gallo, Benjamin Gitlow, Kate Gitlow, D. Grey, Marion Grey, A. Gross, M. Hankin, Will Herberg, B. Herman, M. Intrator, B. Kalfides, A. Kobel, M. Kormazior, Grace Lamb, Jay Lovestone, Minnie Lurye, L. Marks, B. Miller, W. Miller, Sabi Nahama, M. Nemser, Charles Novak, R. Pires, Elsi Pultur, J. Reed, B. Ralph, P. Rubinstein, J. Shaffer, Miriam Silvis, J. Sorenson, Mary Smith, P. Siro, F. Vrateric, M. Wagshull, Edward Welsh, W.J. White, Bertram Wolfe, M. Yablon, Clara Yampolsky, H. Zam, and Charles Zimmerman.²³

Of this group, B. Miller, Lazar Becker, the two Gitlows, and Herbert Zam split away in factional disputes during the early years. J. O. Bentall died in 1933.²⁴ Most of the rest of the original national council members remained with the group until it dissolved.

In the earliest years, Jay Lovestone, Benjamin Gitlow, Bertram Wolfe, and Herbert Zam were perhaps the most outstanding members of the leadership. However, with the defection of Gitlow and Zam, it was Lovestone, Wolfe, and Herberg who came to constitute a kind of unofficial top leadership. Will Herberg is the authority for the statement that Lovestone and Wolfe were the two top men, and that he, Herberg, was the third most important figure, but "on a lower level."²⁵

Jay Lovestone, of course, held a unique position in the Communist Opposition. The popular name for the group derived from his name—although the "Lovestoneites" themselves usually used this name in quotation marks. Herberg has noted that although Lovestone was theoretically the "first among equals," he was in fact a good deal more than that. He was the person who always made the official presentations of the group's point of view, although he never adopted a position for the group without consulting the rest of the leadership.²⁶ Jack Cypin, a one-time leader of the Lovestoneite Youth has commented that Lovestone was looked upon by the youth as being "an elder statesman of the radical movement."²⁷

Lovestone was also the principal "organization man of the group." During most of its existence, he was the main executive officer. It was he also who made periodic trips around the country and to Canada, maintaining contact with local Opposition groups and delivering lectures on a wide variety of subjects. He usually represented the American Opposition at European conferences of the International Communist Opposition and had the closest personal dealings with Opposition leaders in other countries.

While Lovestone was head of the American Communist Opposition, he wrote a great deal, for publication and for internal group purposes. For years he had a regular front page column in *Workers Age* and during the early 1930s wrote long articles on the economic problems of the Great Depression. He

very seldom wrote at length, however, on questions of Marxist-Leninist ideology.

There is no doubt that Jay Lovestone had charisma. Like other leaders of factions of the radical movement, he was capable of engendering great loyalty and devotion on the one hand, and strong dislike and even hatred, on the other. A man of average height, with somewhat sparse sandy hair, and very prominent facial features, Lovestone exuded almost unlimited energy. A bachelor, he was totally devoted to his political work.

Bertram Wolfe, the second-in-command of the Lovestoneite group, was considerably more of a theorist than Lovestone. He was also very interested in art and literature. Wolfe wrote frequently on literary and artistic subjects, as well as on issues of Marxist-Leninist dogma. A thin man, whose premature baldness gave a kind of dome-like appearance to his head, Wolfe was soft-spoken, but often intense in his discussions. It was through Wolfe, who had spent several years in Mexico, that the Lovestoneites developed for several years a close relationship with the dissident Communist Mexican painter, Diego Rivera. Wolfe prevailed upon Rivera to paint a mural for the Lovestoneite group's headquarters.

Will Herberg, who during most of the period was educational director of Local 22 of the International Ladies Garment Workers Union, seems in fact to have spent most of his time on work for the Lovestoneite group. Considerably younger than Lovestone and Wolfe, Herberg fancied himself something of a theorist and often wrote on questions of Marxism-Leninism in *Workers Age*.

A fourth man, Charles Zimmerman, held a special place in the leadership of the Lovestoneite group. He was their successful trade unionist, a major power in the ILGWU, rising to the leadership of its important Dressmakers' Local 22 in the early 1930s. Because of the need to devote most of his time to union activities, Zimmerman was not as closely involved in day-to-day activities of the Communist Opposition as were Lovestone, Wolfe, and Herberg. Nevertheless, he constituted part of the inner circle.

Nature of the Lovestoneite Group

Although during most of the group's existence, the Lovestoneites considered themselves Communists, the Opposition had little of the rigidity which characterized the official Communist movement. Party discipline was relatively loose, and few people were ever expelled from the organization although a number left voluntarily.

Although Jay Lovestone had had the reputation—at least among his opponents—of ruthlessness when he was secretary general of the Communist Party, there is little evidence that he behaved ruthlessly towards his colleagues in the Communist Opposition. There was wide latitude to disagree not only with Lovestone, but with all leaders of the group. Jack Cypin has recalled that

not infrequently in internal party meetings, Lovestone, Wolfe, and Herberg would argue very strongly, sometimes vehemently, for different points of view on particular issues of doctrine or organization.²⁸ Others have also borne witness to the freedom of discussion which existed within the Lovestoneite ranks.

Very early in the history of the group, Will Herberg set forth the Lovestoneite attitude towards internal discussion. He noted that "The Communist Party is a voluntary political association. Membership in the Communist Party is based upon agreement with its fundamental principles." These principles, said Herberg, were "Communism, the role of the bourgeois state as the dictatorship of capital, and the necessity for its overthrow and replacement by a proletarian state, the proletarian dictatorship, the Soviet system, the necessity for a political party of the proletariat as the organization of the vanguard, etc." He went on to comment that "if one disagrees with the fundamental cardinal points in the political program of Communism he has no place in the Communist Party, not because these political doctrines are heaven-sent dogma which one must not violate, but because they represent in concentrated form the interests and historical strivings of the proletariat."

Herberg continued, "The 'limits' of freedom of thought in the Communist Party are therefore clear: they are determined by the fundamentals of Communism. These limits—if indeed they can be called limits at all—are self-imposed and necessary since upon them is based the very possibility of a Communist Party." But Herberg insisted, "within these very broad limits determined by the very class nature of capitalist society *there is the fullest freedom of thought in the Communist Movement.* (Emphasis in the original.) Not only have the Communists the right to think, they have the duty to think. Without continuous and systematic study, investigation and theoretical work on the part of the Communist movement collectively as well as on the part of individual comrades, any real progress of the revolutionary movement is impossible.

"Moreover," Herberg went on, "the membership in the Communist Party implies agreement with certain broad fundamentals. It does not follow that a comrade must agree with every implication or proposition of the Marxian world view—or out he goes! This could convert the Communist Party from a political party into a religious sect."

Finally, Herberg argued that "The Communist Party cannot become a Catholic or Episcopal Church with inquisitions and heresy hunting. Adherence to the Communist Party depends upon agreement with certain great fundamentals; *within the party we allow full freedom of opinion, within of course certain limits determined by the character of the Party as the vanguard of the class.*" (Emphasis in original.) Herberg ended by noting that "This is the viewpoint of the CP-Majority Group."²⁹

This wideness of opinion was reflected in the Lovestoneite periodicals. During periods of factional struggle, both sides' views were published in

Revolutionary Age or *Workers Age*. Even when there were no such conflicts, the paper often published articles and letters which disagreed with positions taken by one or another of the party leaders.

Conventions and Conferences

From time to time the Lovestoneites held national meetings of delegates from local organizations. These were variously designated as plenums, conferences or conventions. A sampling of the reports on these meetings which appeared in the official periodical will serve to show the nature of the discussions and activities which took place at them.

The Second Plenum of the National Council of the Communist Party (Majority Group) met on February 22-23, 1930, in New York. It was attended by sixty delegates and "a large number of visitors." There were delegates from Boston, Connecticut, New Bedford, New York, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Chicago, Detroit, Baltimore and the Anthracite District. The chairman of the first session was N. Borich, an anthracite miner, and Jay Lovestone gave a report on "The Economic and Political Situation." The second session was under the chairmanship of William Miller, an auto worker from Detroit, and Marion Grey reported on the Young Communist League Opposition. The third session, presided over by J. Newby, a Negro shipyard worker from Philadelphia, heard a report by Ben Gitlow on "The Situation in the Communist Movement, Our Activities, Problems and Tasks." A fourth meeting was presided over by F. Vrateric, a coal miner and member of the Executive Board of the National Miners Union, and the fifth one was chaired by Ed Welsh, a Negro and chairman of the Harlem Tenants League. At the fifth session Bert Wolfe delivered a report on the crisis in the Communist International and the progress of the International Communist Opposition.³⁰

Two and a half years later, on September 3-5, 1932, a national conference was held. *Workers Age* reported that it "turned out to be one of the most politically successful gatherings ever held by the Communist movement in this country." A Lovestone report on a recent conference of the ICO was followed by "thoro discussion." Ben Gitlow reported on the state of the CPO in organized labor, while Will Herberg discussed *Workers Age*. It was stated that discussion involved participation by thirty delegates, who "exhibited very emphatically qualities of realistic analysis and sober self-criticisms." This conference decided to change the name of the group from Communist Party (Majority Group) to Communist Party (Opposition).³¹

The Fifth Convention of the CPO was held on August 31 and September 1 and 2, 1935. Eighty delegates were present. Among the reports delivered was one by Jim Cork on the international situation, one by Charles Zimmerman on the trade unions, and one by Jay Lovestone on "The present situation and our tasks." It was noted that most of the discussion centered on this last report.³²

The last national meeting of the Lovestoneites took place at the end of December 1940. It was this session which decided upon the final dissolution of the group, after adopting a long resolution on the situation created by the Second World War.³³

Nature of Lovestoneite Activities

The various branches of the Communist Opposition engaged in a variety of different activities. Public meetings, sometimes addressed by Lovestone, Wolfe, Herberg, or some other national leader; forums, debates with rival radical groups, and sales of the party paper were among the most consistent kinds of activity. Activities by Oppositionists within trade unions, organizations of the unemployed, tenants leagues, and other such groups were of great importance.

A sampling of functions as reported in *Workers Age* will serve to indicate the kinds of things in which the group's membership was involved. In September 1932 it was reported that the branch in Hartford had organized a Marxian Educational Society.³⁴ A month later this Society was reported as sponsoring a meeting at which Will Herberg would speak on the Soviet Five Year Plan. At the same time, it was reported that the CPO group in Fort Wayne had been engaging in "good educational work."

In December 1932 *Workers Age* carried reports of meetings organized to celebrate the fifteenth anniversary of the Bolshevik Revolution. The meeting in San Antonio featured speeches in English and Spanish. The one in Hartford was addressed by J. O. Bentall of the CPO and J. B. Mathews of the Socialist party. At the same time, the CPO unit in the anthracite area was reported to be organizing a workers educational club and had organized a fifteenth anniversary meeting jointly with the Socialist Labor party, where F. Vrateric spoke for the Lovestoneites. This group was also reported to be working with the official Communists within the Croatian Fraternal Union to foil expulsion attempts by "reactionaries."³⁵

In January 1933 Jay Lovestone went on tour, and local units of the CPO organized meetings for him. A thousand people heard him speak on "Hitler and Hitlerism" at the Peoples Forum in Detroit; in Fort Wayne he spoke to "a select group of workers" on the rise of the Communist movement in the United States and addressed the Fort Wayne Forum in a speech entitled "What Next in Germany?" In Chicago 175 workers attended an open meeting of the CPO to hear Jay talk on Germany. Here he also met with a group of members and sympathizers of the official Communist Party.³⁶

In the fall of 1933, the CPO unit in San Antonio was active in aiding a strike of local cigar workers. They advised the strikers only to have U.S. citizens on the picket line since Mexican workers, if arrested, might be deported.³⁷

Early in 1934 Harry Connor reported from Fort Wayne on the CPO's support for and participation in a movement to start a local Labor party. He

said that its mass base was the unemployed workers organization and that the official Communists were strongly opposing the idea.³⁸

An article in May 1934 noted the activities of the CPO in Harlem. A group had been started there in February 1933 and now numbered thirty members. All but three were Negroes. The Harlem group had established a branch of the Workers Unemployment Union and had launched the Harlem Interracial Forum, which had official Communists and Socialists in it as well as CPO members. The group had also established its own Harlem New Workers School, which was running three courses. The article summed up by claiming that the CPO was "a definite force to be reckoned with in Harlem," far surpassing either the Socialist or Communist parties in the area.³⁹

In January 1939 the New York Dressmakers branches of the by then Independent Labor League had joined with the Socialist party to issue a leaflet against the Roosevelt Administration's rearmament program. It was noted that the branch had recently added eight new members.⁴⁰ Three months later the New York Lovestoneites had a representative at the New York City budget hearings to protest cuts in education and welfare funds and an increase in the "debt service" item in the budget.⁴¹

In most cities where the Opposition Communists had local organizations they either participated in or organized their own May Day celebrations each year. In some years they worked with the Socialists, Communists, Trotskyites and union groups, although usually it was not possible to organize that broad a coalition.

The Opposition Communists also participated in election campaigns, although there is no indication that they ever offered their own candidates. In 1932 and 1936 they supported the official Communist presidential candidates. In 1940, on the other hand, having broken more or less completely with their Communist associations, they backed Norman Thomas, the Socialist.

Lovestoneite Participation in Other Groups

The Communist Oppositionists did not organize "front groups" or "transmission belts" such as those the official Communist Party established and dominated for many decades. However, the Lovestoneite leaders and some of the rank and file did participate in organizations in which they collaborated with members of other radical factions and with independent leftist intellectuals. Three of these are particularly noteworthy.

Lovestoneites were very active in the International Relief Association. A predecessor of the still existing International Rescue Committee, the IRA owed its origins to efforts of Albert Einstein and others and had been established in Germany before the Nazis came to power. After the Nazi takeover the Lovestoneites became associated with the IRA to help some of the Brandlerites (German Communist Oppositionists) get out of Germany. When Einstein came to the United States, he continued to play a leading role in the

International Relief Association as did the Lovestoneites, but the Communist Oppositionists did not try to dominate the group.

A second element with which the Lovestoneites had close connections was the group of intellectuals headed by V. F. Calverton, who put out *The Modern Monthly*. These people met once a month in Calverton's apartment, and among those participating were Bert Wolfe, Will Herberg and Jay Lovestone, as well as the economic historian Louis Hacker, the literary critic Granville Hicks, NYU Professor Sterling Spero, and journalists including Ben Stolberg, Lewis Gannett and William Hazlitt. They would not only plan the contents of future issues of *The Modern Monthly* but also discuss ideological and political issues.

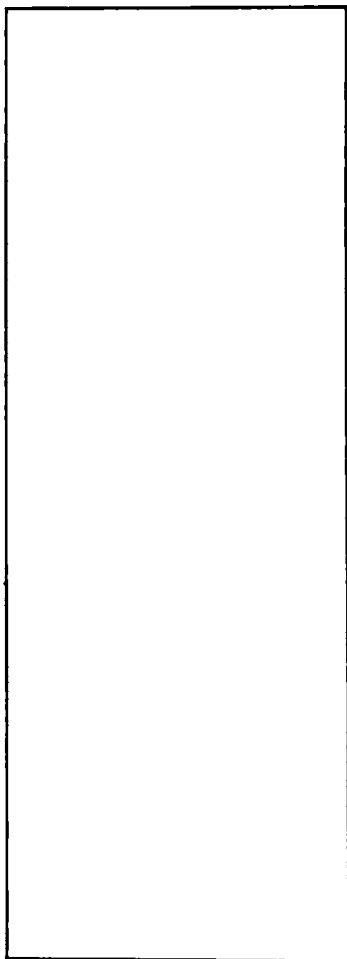
The third group in which the Lovestoneites were active was that which published *Marxist Review*. The members included many who were active with *Modern Monthly* and generally were people interested in Marxism as the most important ideological influence in the twentieth century but who were not necessarily Marxists themselves. The Lovestoneites had considerable influence in this group, although they did not try to dominate it.⁴²

Much of the effort of the Lovestoneites was concentrated on activity in the organized labor movement. They were influential in several of the country's more important unions, although it could not be said that they were a major factor in United States organized labor.

One of the most outstanding differences between the Lovestoneites and the official Communists during the first half of the period in which the Communist Opposition existed (1929-35) was their approach to trade union affairs. The Stalinists were busy withdrawing their supporters from existing unions and forming separate Communist-dominated ones. The Lovestoneites, on the other hand, argued that the Communists ought to work, as the CPO was busily doing, within the established unions, to which most organized workers belonged.

Although the official Communists came around to the Lovestoneites' position with the change in the Comintern line in the middle 1930s, the Communist Oppositionists continued to oppose the Stalinists in the organized labor movement. During the late 1930s this antagonism became particularly bitter. It was in this period that the official Communists, whose influence in the labor movement

The Lovestoneites in the Labor Movement



had been marginal during the first half of the decade, surpassed the Lovestoneites in influence and power in the unions.

The Issue of "Dual Unionism"

Although opposition to formation of specifically Communist unions became a major element in the quarrel between the Lovestoneites and the official Communists, this difference was not entirely clear at the time that Jay Lovestone and his followers were removed from leadership of the Communist Party. While Lovestone was still secretary general the process of forming Communist-dominated "dual unions" had already started. The first such organization, the National Miners Union, was established in September 1928. Pat Toohey was its secretary-treasurer. During the same month the National Textile Workers Union was established, headed by Albert Weisbord. On January 1, 1929, the Needle Trades Workers Industrial Union in the garment and fur industries was set up under Ben Gold's leadership.¹

The idea that establishment of dual Communist-controlled unions should become the general Communist line was first put forward in the Congress of the Profintern—the International Communist trade union group—in Moscow early in 1928. The majority of the United States delegation there were members of the Lovestone faction, and they opposed the idea,² although when it became official Comintern policy, they at first tended to go along with it.³ In fact, the Lovestoneite faction seemed to hasten to conform. Thus, Max Bedacht, then a leading member of the Lovestoneite majority, "went Foster one better by coming out for new unions even if the old ones continued to grow and did not decline as Foster expected."⁴

Even after they had been expelled from the official Communist Party, the Oppositionists continued for some time to collaborate in the dual unions. They even participated in transforming the Trade Union Educational League (TUEL), which during most of the 1920s had been the Communist tool for "boring from within" the established unions. The TUEL became the Trade Union Unity League (TUUL), a rival central labor organization to the American Federation of Labor, at a convention in Cleveland, Ohio, on August 31 and September 1, 1929.⁵

Even while continuing for a while to work within the TUUL, the Lovestoneites were highly critical of its sectarianism. This criticism was reflected in a series of articles by Ben Gitlow in *Revolutionary Age* on the founding convention of the Trade Union Unity League.

The Lovestoneites soon came around to a firm position against dual unionism and in favor of working within the established labor movement. Following this line, the Oppositionists were able to achieve influence in a number of the American Federation of Labor and independent unions. These included the International Ladies Garment Workers, the International Fur

Workers, and some other groups in New York City; the United Mine Workers in Pennsylvania and West Virginia; and the shoe workers organizations in New England. In the late 1930s, the Lovestoneites also acquired considerable influence in the United Automobile Workers Union and the Textile Workers Organizing Committee.

Lovestoneite Advocacy of a Labor Party

Another policy which the American Communist Oppositionists advocated during most of their existence was support for a Labor party. Within the Communist Party they had supported this idea at least until 1924, and they continued to back it once they were thrown out of the CPUSA. A characteristic statement of the Lovestoneite position was the resolution approved by the Plenum of the National Committee of the CPO in December 1934. This was later published as a pamphlet entitled *Why a Labor Party?*

This resolution-pamphlet started out with an analysis of the existing political organizations. The Democratic party it proclaimed to be an "instrument of Big Business;"⁶ the Republican party to be "the second pillar of the two-party system, still serving as the foundation of political reaction in the country."⁷ As for the existing radical parties, the document argued that "Except in isolated localities, the vote of the working class parties, Communist and Socialist, was utterly insignificant. Amongst the great mass of the working class population, as well as amongst the toiling masses in the rural areas, both the Socialist and the Communist Party are of no serious consequence."⁸

The CPO argued in the resolution, however, that there was growing unrest in the working class, reflected in the rapid growth of the unions, and added that "A significant index of this growing dissatisfaction, of this first stage of radicalization, is the increasing interest in and support of independent working class political action in the form of a Labor Party."⁹

The resolution asserted that "No real improvement of their immediate conditions is possible for the workers, and still more, no abolition of the whole capitalist system and exploitation and oppression is conceivable while the workers continue so unorganized and even fighting against each other on the political field." Therefore, "A vital next step in developing the class consciousness and defending the class interests of the proletariat is the establishment of a mass Labor Party of the workers who (in alliance with the impoverished farmers) will wage the immediate struggle against the Republican and Democratic Parties."¹⁰

However, the Lovestoneites warned that "No worker can or should (and least of all the Communist worker) demand that the Labor party should be a revolutionary party or even a party radical enough to accept Communist leadership."¹¹ Rather, they said, "The Labor Party can and must be made to serve as an organization for advancing, in the largest measure possible, the

immediate interests and the elementary political consciousness of the working class and thus check the political aggressiveness of the bourgeoisie."¹²

The role of the Labor party was to be a transitional one, from the Communist point of view. The Lovestoneites proclaimed that "We should not connect the Labor Party with any aims achievable only by a Communist Party; such as the Proletarian Dictatorship, Soviet Power, etc."¹³ However, the Labor party should present unique opportunities for Communists. The resolution said that "we must conduct, constructively, campaigns inside the Labor Party for more leftward demands, attuned, of course, to the need of maintaining the broadest organizational base for the Labor Party. Given such broad unity of action thru a Labor Party, we have here an engine of effective mass struggle against Fascism, war and capitalist reaction in general."¹⁴

Local 22 of the ILGWU

Charles S. Zimmerman, who was to emerge as head of powerful Local 22 of the International Ladies Garment Workers Union, a vice president of the ILG, and to be the most important Lovestoneite in the labor movement, took part in setting up the dual Needle Trades Workers Industrial Union while still a member of the official Communist Party. He was in fact a vice president of the NTWIU, although in its founding convention he had argued against its establishment.¹⁵ He published an article in the first issue of *Revolutionary Age* in which he noted that the NTWIU had been established in 1928, and had called a general dressmakers strike which "succeeded in considerably improving the conditions of the workers and in establishing a base for our Union gaining thousands of new members" against an "unholy alliance of the Schlesinger-Dubinsky-McGrady clique, the employers, the police, the government, and the underworld."

However, Zimmerman claimed that the NTWIU was in crisis by late 1929, because the new leadership of the official Communist Party used the union to fight its factional opponents. Zimmerman ended by saying "The splitting activities of the Party leadership will be stopped and with united forces we will march forward to defeat the bosses and the company union, and to reestablish the only union of the workers of the needle trades—the Needle Trades Workers Industrial Union."¹⁶

However, by the end of 1930 the official Communists had removed Lovestoneites from all positions in the NTWIU, and Zimmerman had to go to work in a garment shop once again. This was not easy, because the Communists did their utmost to keep him out of any union shops. Zimmerman rejoined the International Ladies Garment Workers Union, specifically its Local 22, which had only about eighteen hundred dues-paying members. He organized a committee of 25, a rank and file group dedicated to rebuilding the local, composed of Lovestoneites, anarchists, and independent radicals. They suc-

cessfully organized a number of new shops and built up a following for themselves in the union.

In 1932, Zimmerman was elected to the board of Local 22. However, old-line Socialist leaders of the union strongly objected to this, although he had the support of some younger Socialists headed by Murray Gross. Zimmerman's opponents appealed to the Dressmakers Joint Board against Zimmerman's election, and when turned down there, appealed to the general board of the ILGWU, and finally to the union's convention. They lost all attempts to keep Zimmerman out of the leading body of Local 22.¹⁷ This was clear in the May 1932 union convention which finally turned down the attempt to bar Zimmerman from a leadership position. Secretary treasurer David Dubinsky commented that Zimmerman had been upheld because of "the spirit of generosity" of the convention. Zimmerman replied that there was no such thing, that the leadership of the union was doing nothing to halt the decline of the union and the terrible conditions in the shops, and added that "you fear the membership, you want to justify somehow the white washing of various elements of your machine. . . . Your intention was to fool the membership with your so-called 'impartiality' and 'generosity.'" ¹⁸

A few months later *Workers Age* strongly attacked a settlement reached by ILG leaders, together with Morris Hillquit as the union attorney, and Lt. Governor Herbert Lehman as mediator, of a dispute involving the cloakmakers. The ratification meeting was presided over by David Dubinsky, who was alleged to have rammed through acceptance. In his speech, Dubinsky "made a very bitter attack on the Progressive League, calling it a 'disruptive group' in the union."¹⁹ The Progressive League was the Lovestoneite-organized element in the union.

Early in 1933 Charles Zimmerman was asked by the manager of Local 22, Max Bluestein, an old anarchist who wanted to retire to join an anarchist commune, to run for his post. According to Zimmerman, Bluestein was convinced that Zimmerman could better handle the problems facing the local than Bluestein himself could.²⁰ The election was held on April 6, 1933, and Charles Zimmerman was elected manager of Local 22 for the first time, as head of the Lovestoneite Progressive slate, albeit by a very narrow margin. He received 396 out of a total of 825 votes cast. Stempler of the "Left Group" got 319 votes, and another candidate received the rest. However, the Progressive slate elected four business agents and sixteen out of the twenty-five members of the executive board.²¹ From then on the Lovestoneites controlled Local 22 as long as they existed as a political group. Charles Zimmerman retired as manager—and vice president of the ILG—in the early 1970s after having headed Local 22 for nearly forty years.

In spite of the antiadministration role of the Lovestoneites, David Dubinsky, Luigi Antonini and Julius Hochman, all Socialists, spoke at the installation meeting of Zimmerman as Local 22 manager. Dubinsky commented on his differences with the Lovestoneites, but "expressed the hope that

the local executive would carry on the work of organizing the dressmakers and building up a strong dressmakers union."²²

Such proved to be the case. Less than three months after installation of the Zimmerman administration in Local 22, it won a general strike in the dress-making industry in New York City and neighboring areas. This was part of a mass organization effort of the ILG in the early months of the New Deal and was a complete success. After the strike Zimmerman wrote that "The general strike of the dressmakers of New York City and vicinity, just concluded, will go down in history as one of the most militant struggles ever carried thru by a labor union." He concluded that "The correct course of the Communist Opposition, the policy of working within the mass unions in a constructive manner, to make them better fighting weapons for the workers, made the Communist Opposition into a guiding and leading force in the strike and greatly increased its influence among the workers."²³

This walkout marked the virtual rebirth of the International Ladies Garment Workers Union. Local 22 suddenly grew to more than 30,000 members, while Local 89, the Italian Dressmakers Local, skyrocketed to 40,000 members.²⁴ These became two of the largest union locals in the country. Because of their success in leading Local 22, the Lovestoneites' control of the union was solidified in 1934. In elections on March 22 all their candidates for manager, executive board, business agents, and ILG convention delegates were elected by substantial majorities.²⁵

Meanwhile the constructive role of the Lovestoneites within the union was increasingly recognized, even by their opponents. Thus, Jay Lovestone was invited to deliver a speech at the 1934 convention of the ILG. He attacked the National Recovery Administration (NRA) in his talk, and David Dubinsky, by then president of the union, replied by saying that they agreed to disagree on that issue.²⁶

The Lovestoneites continued to urge the official Communists to give up their dual union in the garment trades and join the ILG. The Communist-controlled group rejected the idea.²⁷ Nevertheless, the Lovestoneites condemned actions by the ILG leadership against those parts of the union in which official Communists were active. Local 9 was under Stalinist control in 1933, and *Workers Age* strongly attacked the move by the general executive board of the ILG to try the leaders of Local 9,²⁸ and when the executive board ousted Local 9's leadership, the administration of Local 22 protested.²⁹

When the official Communists finally did return to the ILG in the mid-1930s, they contested the Lovestoneite leadership of Local 22 for a number of years. Charles Zimmerman commented to his friends on various occasions that he wasn't surprised at the strength of the Communists' antagonism, since he had originally organized them.³⁰ However, for a period of four years, the Lovestoneite leadership of the local allowed a handful of Communists to run on its progressive slate in elections.³¹

Over the years the antagonism between the Lovestoneite leadership of

Local 22 and the ILG administration of President David Dubinsky was attenuated. The Lovestoneites supported the administration's original association with the CIO when it was first formed in 1935. When Dubinsky became disillusioned in the CIO in early 1938, the Lovestoneites came to his defense against particularly bitter attacks by the official Communists. *Workers Age* carried a piece entitled "President Dubinsky and the CIO—an Editorial Statement," which noted that "As we have indicated above, we do not see entirely eye to eye with President Dubinsky on how trade union unity may best be achieved. . . . But it is nothing short of a crime against the C.I.O. to question Mr. Dubinsky's loyalty to the movement, to attempt to launch a heresy hunting drive against him and the I.L.G.W.U., or to carry on a whispering campaign for the purpose of stirring up dissension and setting off one section of the movement against another."³²

Later in the year, when Dubinsky moved to have the ILG withdraw from the CIO and remain independent, Zimmerman, as a member of the general executive board, commented that "I agree with the content and spirit of the proposed resolution. I am opposed to the formation of a dual movement. But I am in favor of sending delegates to the CIO convention in order to present our program for unity."³³ Shortly before the Lovestoneites went out of existence, they supported the Dubinsky administration's decision to take the ILG back into the American Federation of Labor.³⁴

Lovestoneite Control of Local 155 of ILG

Louis Nelson, who was to emerge as another important Lovestoneite leader in the International Ladies Garment Workers Union, like Zimmerman, was first active in the Communists' Needle Trades Workers Industrial Union for several years. In April 1931 he joined with Zimmerman and I. Stenzer to issue a statement for the Needle Trades Unity League, urging liquidation of the NTWIU and return of its members to the ILG. The official Communists denounced this group as the "main obstacle to unity" of the workers in the Industrial Union.³⁵

Like Zimmerman, Nelson ultimately quit the NTWIU and rejoined the ILG. He became a member of Local 155, the Knitgoods Workers Local. This, like Local 22, had been a center of Communist influence in the ILG in the 1920s, and it became a major center of Lovestoneite influence in the 1930s. The Communist Oppositionists first won control in elections in April 1934.³⁶

When the Lovestoneites first took over leadership of Local 155, the union was at a low ebb. Its membership was small, its debts large, and anti-union employers in its branch of the industry were strong. Under Nelson's leadership the union began effectively to enforce the collective agreement against recalcitrant employers. The new administration established regular membership, shop chairmen and shop meetings. Shortly after taking office it brought about the merger of three competing unions (one independent, one TUUL, and one

of the United Textile Workers) with Local 155. The Nelson administration also set up an education department and established a sick and relief fund. It likewise organized a union hiring hall, which strengthened the bargaining power of the Local.³⁷

When the Lovestoneites controlled Local 155, the official Communists constituted the major opposition group. For a short while in the late 1930s, it was Lovestoneite policy to work with the official Communists in the ILG and some other unions, and official Communists were assured of some places on Lovestoneite-controlled Progressive lists of candidates for union office. Louis Nelson objected strongly to this policy and finally resigned from the Lovestoneites in protest.³⁸

Lovestoneites in the Furriers Union

Although the Opposition Communists seem to have had very little influence in the "sister" union of the ILG, the Amalgamated Clothing Workers, they did play a considerable role in the third garment union, the International Fur Workers Union, an AFL affiliate. Throughout the 1930s they carried on a fight in that union against the administration—first against the Old Guard Socialist group in charge, and then, after the official Communists returned to the union and quickly won control, against them.

During the early 1930s, the Lovestoneites' Furriers Progressive League constituted the principal opposition within the Joint Board of the Furriers in New York City to the administration headed by Samuel Schorr, a right-wing Socialist.³⁹ The principal Lovestoneite leader among the Furriers was B. Baraz. He was described by *Workers Age* in 1934 as "one of the most active workers in the Joint Council of the International Fur Workers Union."⁴⁰

Throughout the early 1930s, the Lovestoneites in the Furriers International urged the official Communists to liquidate the fur workers section of the Needle Trades Workers Industrial Union and merge with the AFL affiliate. By 1935 the "line" of the Communist International had changed, and the official Communists' fur workers organization was amenable to unity. It was the Lovestoneites within the AFL union who pushed a resolution in the organization's convention in Toronto, urging dissolution of the Industrial Union, admission of all its members to the International Fur Workers Union, and new elections as soon as they were admitted. Their efforts were successful and the resolution was passed.⁴¹

Elections were held after the reunification. The official Communists, showing no gratitude for the Lovestoneites' fight for their admission to the International, issued a pamphlet the day before the election warning the workers not to vote for the Lovestoneites.⁴² The official Communists elected all their candidates for the Furriers Joint Council, although they ran nominees for only half of the posts at stake. The Lovestoneites succeeded in electing five members of the Council and Benjamin Baraz as business agent.⁴³

From then on there was a bitter but unequal struggle between the official Communists and the Lovestoneites within the furriers union. The Stalinist administration, headed by Ben Gold, was notorious for the dictatorial way in which it ran the organization, and the Lovestoneite Progressives had little hope of obtaining more than a token position in the leadership. Soon even that possibility disappeared.

In 1936 the Lovestoneites and Socialists joined forces when the Socialists dissolved their caucus and joined the Furriers Progressive Unity League under Lovestoneite leadership.⁴⁴ However, a few months later union elections brought the defeat of Baraz as business agent, although Lovestoneites won three posts and the Socialists, two, in the New York Joint Council. In 1937 the Lovestoneites had only four delegates, all from New York, to the union's convention, where they supported the move for the Fur Workers to join the CIO.⁴⁵ About a month later, as the result of a temporary agreement with the official Communists, two Lovestoneites, Lena Greenberg and Joe Farber, were elected to the Joint Council with Communist support, while Baraz, who lacked such endorsement, once again failed to be elected business agent.⁴⁶

In 1938 new efforts were made to unite all those opposed to Communist domination of the union. A meeting at the Rand School formed a united front "of right and left wing socialists, anarchists, Lovestoneites, right and left wing Zionists, as well as a number of progressive workers without political affiliation."⁴⁷ Shortly afterwards, the new group, the United Progressive Furriers, sent an appeal to John L. Lewis, head of the CIO, against the Communists' "Gold-Potash Clique Rule." This appeal, which brought no results, was signed by Sam Glassman, Benjamin Baraz and Nathan Kramer.⁴⁸

Late in 1938 the Stalinists began to take punitive measures against the Lovestoneites in the union. In December the Grievance Board of the Furriers' New York Council informed Benjamin Baraz that he had been found guilty of "unwarranted and malicious slander" of the Communist leadership of the Joint Council, but that punishment would be suspended "subject to your future behavior."⁴⁹ In the 1939 union elections the Communists vetoed a number of Progressive candidates and refused to allow Progressive watchers at the polls, causing the Lovestoneites and their allies to boycott the election.⁵⁰

In spite of their bitter struggle against the Stalinist leadership, the Lovestoneites reacted negatively when Ben Gold and twenty-five other leaders of the furriers were indicted under the antitrust laws. *Workers Age* urged the AFL "to avoid a retaliatory attitude," and to join the CIO in protesting against prosecution of Gold and his colleagues even though the furriers union was a CIO affiliate and the leaders were Communists, since "Labor solidarity must be the first consideration. Furthermore, the outcome of this trial may go a long way in affecting the results of future prosecutions."⁵¹

The denouement of the Lovestoneite fight against Stalinist control of the furriers came during 1940. Early in March the grievance board of the New York Furriers suspended six Progressive leaders for two years and fined each

of them twenty-five dollars.⁵² Efforts were made to rally public opinion in defense of the suspended union leaders both inside and outside the union. Late in May a conference to fight for the rights of the Progressive furriers was sponsored by the Social Democratic Federation, Jewish Socialist Verband, Socialist Party, the Lovestoneites, Left Poale Zion, Poale-Zeire Zion, and the Jewish Anarchist Federation. Several weeks later a public meeting was addressed by Norman Thomas for the American Civil Liberties Union, as well as by Jacob Panken, Algernon Lee, Nathan Chanin, and S. Shurstein, right-wing Socialists.⁵³ None of these efforts succeeded in reversing the grievance board's decision.

The Lovestoneites in the Textile Workers Union

The principal center of Lovestoneite strength among the textile workers was in silk workers locals in Paterson, New Jersey. The Lovestoneites also had some influence in the few textile locals in New York City. *Workers Age*, in reporting the 1934 convention of the United Textile Workers, credited B. Herman, a Lovestoneite delegate from Local 2148 of New York City, with introducing resolutions for a Labor Party, condemning William Green's opposition to the recent San Francisco general strike, a call for a world congress against fascism, and for a general strike in case of war.⁵⁴

Until the advent of the CIO, the American Federation of Silk Workers, with locals in Paterson, N.J., was an autonomous affiliate of the AFL's United Textile Workers (UTW). When the UTW was superseded by the CIO's Textile Workers Organizing Committee (TWOC), the silk workers lost their autonomy.

Until early 1935 a Lovestoneite, Eli Keller, was manager of the Paterson silk workers union. However, he resigned in February of that year because of being blocked by an "irresponsible executive committee." The official Communists, who had recently returned from the TUUL, put up Sarkis Phillian, and conservatives nominated Alex Williams. The Communists and conservatives joined forces to deny Keller the right to run. Williams won the election.⁵⁵

In spite of the victory of a conservative, the official Communists in effect took over leadership of the Paterson union. Late in 1935 they were responsible for a disastrous strike, opposed by the Lovestoneites on the grounds that no walkout could succeed unless it was part of a general strike of all silk workers. Only about 15 percent of silk production was still being carried out in the Paterson area.⁵⁶

Shortly afterwards, President McMahon of the UTW withdrew the charter of the silk workers in Paterson, in the face of members' rejecting a contract supported by him, and he issued a charter to a new organization. The Lovestoneite Progressive group "decided not to enter the newly chartered local or to accept any office in it."⁵⁷ Then, when the TWOC entered the scene,

all existing textile workers locals in Paterson were merged into a single one, and two Lovestoneites, Meyer Laks and Meyer Chanatzky, were on the executive board of the new group.

A New York lawyer, Irving Abramson, appointed by the TWOC to be in charge of organizing efforts in the Paterson area, soon aligned himself with the Communist elements in the local, against Old Guard Socialists and Lovestoneites. The latter accused him of signing an agreement to end a strike in September 1938, which provided for poorer conditions than the workers had before. The agreement was repudiated by the local membership, which subsequently submitted two demands to the TWOC: that business agents be elected and not appointed, and that the executive board be recognized "as head of the union between membership meetings."⁵⁸ When the official Communists who controlled the Paterson local tried to punish their opponents by expelling Meyer Laks, suspending Chanatzky and fining a third Progressive, Joseph Fur, fifty dollars, this action was reversed due to pressure from the rank and file. Laks was reinstated, returning to his old job, and was paid fifty dollars by the union as compensation for wages lost.⁵⁹

Lovestoneites in Shoe Workers Unions

Early in 1934 several shoe workers groups joined to form the United Shoe and Leather Workers Union, of which Israel Zimmerman (not to be confused with Charles Zimmerman) was secretary.⁶⁰ At the union's founding convention, according to *Workers Age*, "The conscious and constructive forces... grouped around I. Zimmerman, warned against the deficiencies and dangers of a loose organization and were denounced by the New Yorkers as Boot and Shoe A. F. of L. agents." The article added that "Today the shoe workers know from their own bitter experience who were the constructive and who the destructive elements in the Union." The New York group referred to were the ex-TUULers, official Communists.⁶¹

In March 1935 Israel Zimmerman was elected general organizer, equivalent of president, of the United Shoe and Leather Workers Union,⁶² with a plurality of 2,460 votes, against about 4,300 in all cast for three rivals. Another candidate on the progressive ticket, Wilson, was elected secretary-treasurer, receiving 3,548 votes to 3,377 for his single opponent.⁶³

The Lovestoneite leadership of the union faced serious opposition, particularly from the Stalinists. The Communist Party faction were accused of working with "the most reactionary, opportunist, and job-seeking elements."⁶⁴ At the October 1935 convention of the union, the Lovestoneites, still in control, pushed through resolutions favoring a Labor party, opposing compulsory arbitration, and for social insurance. The official Communists' efforts to get the convention to recall all general executive board members and call new elections were "overwhelmingly defeated." The Communists centered their attack particularly on Israel Zimmerman. He reported to the convention

that negotiations for merger of the three unions still existing in the field had been successfully completed, and the results would soon be submitted to the membership of the three groups.⁶⁵

By the late 1930s the Lovestoneites had lost control of the shoe workers. Israel Zimmerman was no longer president of the union, which by then was affiliated with the CIO.⁶⁶

Lovestoneites in the United Mine Workers

During the early years of the Lovestoneites' existence, they had some influence in the leadership of the anthracite miners in eastern Pennsylvania. They always were able to maintain a party local in that area, although after 1932 their role was peripheral to the union.

The principal Lovestoneite leader among the miners was Frank Vrataric. He was a delegate to the January 1932 convention of the United Mine Workers, and led the "Progressive" faction. He took a leading part in an unsuccessful effort to block the move of John L. Lewis's administration to expel official Communists from the union. Subsequently, in May 1932, Vrataric and other opposition leaders were themselves purged from the UMW, with Vrataric being suspended for fifteen years.

Vrataric and other Lovestoneites then worked with others who had been expelled in an effort to win readmittance. In September 1932 a meeting was held in Wilkes-Barre of "all active workers and of those expelled from the UMW for their strike activity." Vrataric introduced a motion at this meeting: "(1) That we begin to mobilize the miners against the wage cut by going to speak to the members of the union in the locals, by holding mass meetings etc.; (2) that we declare ourselves in favor of the organization of the unemployed and of social insurance; (3) that we call ourselves the Progressive Group in the UMWA and fight for the reinstatement of all the expelled and for democracy in the unions." There was considerable friction between Vrataric and another leader of the anti-Lewis miners, Maloney, on the one hand, and official Communist representatives on the other.⁶⁷

In spite of their suspension, Vrataric and other Lovestoneites opposed any attempt to divide the United Mine Workers. When Maloney and another expelled leader, Capellini, issued a call to a convention to form a New United Mine Workers of the Anthracite Field in August 1933, the Lovestoneites strongly opposed the move.⁶⁸ They also were against formation of the Progressive Miners of America (PMA), as a result of a rebellion of the UMW affiliates in Illinois against John L. Lewis's tyrannical administration. An editorial in *Workers Age*, after praising the militancy of the Illinois miners, noted that "what is needed now is not a new union but the organization of a powerful force inside the UMWA to drive Lewis out and to unify the forces of the miners into a powerful union capable of defeating the offensive of the operators."⁶⁹

By 1935 the influence of the Lovestoneites among the miners had virtually disappeared. *Workers Age*, on March 1, 1935, in commenting on the most recent convention of the UMW, noted with regard to the "progressive" elements of the union that "there just weren't any. Whatever progressive voices there were present were not organized."⁷⁰

Lovestoneite Influence in Various New York City Unions

The Opposition Communists had some influence from time to time in a number of unions in the New York City area in addition to those we have already noted. However, only rarely did they play a major leadership role in any of these.

The Lovestoneites were active among the hotel and restaurant workers of the city. In 1933-34 there existed in New York City an independent union in this field, the Amalgamated Food Workers. It was led by the Trotskyites and Ben Gitlow, by then head of a small radical group of his own. The Lovestoneites were the principal political group in opposition to the Trotskyite-Gitlow administration of the union. It was largely destroyed as the result of the failure of a strike early in 1934. An article in *Workers Age* on May 1, 1934 claimed that only the Lovestoneites "from the beginning came forward with a concrete militant program of action." They had advocated a waiters' strike on New Year's Eve and had also urged a general strike in Broadway restaurants when the Café de Paree locked out its workers. As a result of the lockout, restaurant workers belonging to the then gangster-ridden Local 16 of the AFL Hotel and Restaurant Workers International had joined the Amalgamated en masse. However, the Amalgamated leadership had opposed a strike on both of these occasions. It finally called one when the Hotel Waldorf Astoria dismissed an Amalgamated leader. The resulting walkout was lost, according to *Workers Age* because of "1. Inexperienced leadership. 2. Lack of preparation. 3. Mechanical leadership. 4. Lack of militancy on the part of the leadership. 5. Kowtowing to the NRA Regional Labor Board." The article noted that the Communists' Industrial Food Workers Union "was disruptive and openly strike breaking" during the walkout.⁷¹

Subsequently the Lovestoneites were active in several New York locals of the AFL's Hotel and Restaurant Workers International. In the late 1930s they headed the opposition to the Stalinists' administration of Local 16, the Waiters Local. Early in 1939 they succeeded in frustrating an effort by the Communists to postpone elections in the Local.⁷² When the election was finally held the Lovestoneite-backed Progressive Culinary League gained 48 percent of the vote, but the "CP-gangster" administration group won by a slender majority.⁷³ In the following year, only a few months before dissolution of the Lovestoneites, the Progressives secured control of Local 16.⁷⁴ The Lovestoneites were also active as leaders of the opposition to Communist control of Local 302, the Cafeteria Workers Local. Their United Progressive

Group published a periodical, *The Spotlight*.⁷⁵ However, they did not succeed in ousting the Stalinist administration. Late in 1939 the Lovestoneites were a moving force in forming an Inter-Local Progressive Culinary Workers organization to fight against both Communist and gangster influence in the nine Greater New York locals of the Hotel and Restaurant Workers International.⁷⁶

For a while in the mid-1930s the Lovestoneites controlled the Doll and Toy Workers Union of New York City. In elections in mid-1935, their Progressive caucus won all eleven posts on the executive committee of the union, against a so-called rank and file group, which *Workers Age* accused of being a coalition of "Left-wingers and Fascists." The rank and file group had (correctly) attacked the Progressives as being members of the Communist Party (Opposition).⁷⁷

The Lovestoneites also had some influence among the organized office workers. In the mid-1930s the principal organization of this group was the directly chartered Local 12646 of the AFL. There were three elements in the union: conservatives, official Communists, and a Progressive group in which Lovestoneites had an important role. In union elections in 1935 the Progressives won all seats on the union executive board.⁷⁸ Subsequently the Local became part of the United Office and Professional Workers of America, formed under CIO auspices. From its inception the UOPWA was under control of the Stalinists. However, at its founding convention a Lovestoneite, Albert Epstein, was the principal opponent of Lewis Merrill, the pro-Stalinist who was elected president.⁷⁹

In New York Local 16 of the UOPWA the Progressives, who formed the opposition to the Communist administration, published *Progressive Office Worker*, edited by Anne Gould. In October 1938 she was suspended from the union for four months by the leadership of the Local.⁸⁰ A few months later some 500 members, led by Anne Gould and the Lovestoneites Miriam Silvis and Albert Epstein, withdrew from Local 16 to join the Bookkeepers, Stenographers and Accountants Union of the AFL. These were principally employees of the ILGWU, Workmen's Circle, Union Health Center, League for Industrial Democracy, Labor Committee for Palestine, Non-Sectarian Anti-Nazi League, and the Workmen's Sick and Death Benefit Fund.⁸¹

Finally, the Lovestoneites played some role in the turbulent history of the Teachers Union of New York during the 1930s. In 1935 there was a split in that union, with left-wing elements successfully revolting against the leadership, which was headed by right-wing Socialists. The Lovestoneites participated in this revolt. Ben Davidson (known in the Lovestoneite group as D. Benjamin) was one of the speakers at a mass meeting of the rebellious element, which was reportedly attended by one thousand union members. Communists and left-wing Socialists were among the other speakers.⁸² Subsequently the influence of the official Communists became dominant in the Teachers Union. The Lovestoneites were an element in the opposition to Stalinist control, as part of the so-called Independent faction. In 1940 it was joined by a new opposition

element which called themselves Liberals, and had recently broken with the Communists.⁸³ Shortly before the dissolution of the Lovestoneites, the New York Teachers Union split once again, an anti-Communist group breaking away and requesting a separate charter from the American Federation of Teachers, which they ultimately acquired. The Lovestoneites supported the break-away group.⁸⁴

The Lovestoneites in the United Automobile Workers

One of the few unions in which the Lovestoneites had for a time very strong influence in the national leadership was the United Automobile Workers. Their policy in the UAW was the subject of considerable controversy within the Lovestoneite group and very much influenced their attitude towards the labor movement in general.

Victor Reuther, a leader in the late 1930s of the Socialist Party faction in the United Auto Workers, has claimed that the Lovestoneites had little or no mass base in the UAW.⁸⁵ Although this is an exaggeration, there is little doubt that the role they played in top union leadership for a couple years was out of proportion to their rank-and-file backing.

From their inception the Lovestoneites had had local groups in Detroit and some other Michigan cities. Considerably before establishment of the United Auto Workers as an AFL-chartered international union, the Lovestoneites had some influence among the various local unions of auto workers the AFL had chartered directly as so-called "federal" locals. In the latter part of 1934 there were two conferences of federal locals in the auto industry. Although these meetings were organized by supporters of the official Communist Party, they did not follow the Communist Party's dual unionism line of the time. The Lovestoneites claimed a considerable portion of the credit for this development. They operated within what was called the Detroit Progressive Group for One Union. *Workers Age* reported that in the second conference of federal auto locals, in Flint in November, 1934, this group presented "a positive program of action with a definite, clear-cut trade union approach which will enable it to rally the workers in the auto industry for the impending struggles."⁸⁶

In 1935 the AFL finally brought together the various federal locals to form the United Automobile Workers Union (UAW) but for the time being appointed the leaders of the new organization. It was not until April 1936 that the UAW held its first convention and elected its own officers.

The Lovestoneites greeted the newly elected officials of the UAW with enthusiasm. These were Homer Martin as president, Wyndham Mortimer as first vice president, Ed Hall as second vice president, Walter Wells as third vice president, and George Addes as general secretary-treasurer. Although none of them belonged to the Lovestoneite group, *Workers Age* hailed them as being

"pledged to such progressive policies within the union as industrial unionism, democracy within the union, and a vigorous organizational drive."⁸⁷

There were at least three fairly well-defined groups within the leadership of the new United Auto Workers Union. One, quite amorphous in its philosophy and objectives, centered on President Homer Martin. A second, the Communist Party-led element, had Vice President Wyndham Mortimer as its most visible leader. The third group, led by members of the Socialist Party, was not represented in the top leadership but had a strong following in many locals, with the three Reuther brothers—Walter, Victor, and Roy—and Emil Mazey as its outstanding figures.

The Lovestoneites were a fourth political element in the union, weaker than any of the others. This group was ideologically closer to the Socialists than to either of the others, and many Lovestoneites felt that they ought to work with the Socialists, arguing that, although the Socialists and Stalinists for the moment had a tactical alliance in the union, this need not persist, and the Socialists might be convinced to take a more independent line.⁸⁸

However, this was not destined to come to pass. By 1937 President Homer Martin felt that his position in the union was imperiled, and he looked for help from outside. He turned to President David Dubinsky of the International Ladies Garment Workers Union, and it was through Dubinsky's influence that an alliance between Martin and the Lovestoneites was forged.⁸⁹

Having considerable confidence in the political experience and anti-Stalinist fervor of the Lovestoneites, President Martin appointed a number of them and their "fellow travellers" to staff positions in the UAW. These included Stuart Strachan, named to the General Motors Bargaining Committee; Eve Stone, national director of the UAW Women's Auxiliary; Glenn Shaddock as UAW organizer in Muskegon; Irving Brown, organization director in Baltimore; and Sidney Jonas, organizer in the east.⁹⁰ Alex Bail, using his "party name" George Miles, was in general charge of the Lovestoneites' work in the Martin administration, although he and others were in frequent contact with Lovestone. Under his party name Bail then and later published a column on labor news in *Workers Age*.

Perhaps most important of all was the appointment of Francis Henson as administrative assistant to President Martin. Although he was nominally a member of the Socialist Party, Henson was a close sympathizer with the Lovestoneites and informed the writer that while serving as Martin's assistant, he was advised principally by Jay Lovestone. Henson commented that Lovestone's advice was usually good but sometimes was not followed by those in the union apparatus.⁹¹

With the Lovestoneites' help, the Martin forces organized a Progressive group caucus. Those opposed to Martin established a Unity Group, which had the backing of the Communists and Socialists. Negotiations held between the two groups to seek "unity" within the union came to nothing. As a result there was bitter factional fighting between them at the UAW convention in

Milwaukee in August 1937. An anti-Martin source claimed a year later that "Only John L. Lewis's wise and timely intervention prevented a destructive split" at the Milwaukee convention. It added that the "Lovestone-Martin plan to kick out certain officers was defeated by Lewis and the Convention ended in general pleas for peace and unity."⁹²

However, peace and unity were not to be. Bitter factional fighting continued and reached a culmination in June 1938, when President Martin suspended five members of the executive board: Secretary-Treasurer George Addes and Vice Presidents Ed Hall, Richard Frankenstein, Wyndham Mortimer and Walter Wells. Subsequently a trial conducted by the pro-Martin members of the executive board expelled Addes, Hall, Frankenstein and Mortimer from the union, while suspending Wells for three months.

Shortly after this the expelled officers of the UAW published a periodical called the *Bulletin* in the format of the official paper of the union, the *United Auto Worker*, and dated August 1938. This paper printed extensive extracts of Jay Lovestone's correspondence with Homer Martin and with various Lovestoneites and their associates, including George Miles and Francis Henson. The main themes of the *Bulletin* were that Martin had acted in a high-handed and unconstitutional manner and that he had done so as part of a Lovestoneite attempt to take over the United Auto Workers. Meanwhile Lovestone publicly charged that his apartment in New York had been ransacked by an agent of the Russian secret police (GPU) and that considerable amounts of his correspondence had been purloined by the thief. He threatened to sue those responsible.⁹³ It was apparently these stolen documents which the *Bulletin* alleged to have "discovered" and some of which it published.

The expelled officers appealed to John L. Lewis and the CIO for support. Although Martin at first refused to permit CIO intervention, he finally accepted a virtual receivership by Philip Murray and Sidney Hillman. These two CIO leaders discharged several of Martin's supporters and reinstated the officers he had expelled.⁹⁴

In October Martin entered into what Howe and Widdick called "dubious negotiations" with Henry Ford, still a staunch opponent of unionization of his workers. These negotiations led to a rupture with R. J. Thomas, who had been one of Martin's major supporters. Thomas accused Martin of seeking "ways of getting the UAW to leave the CIO." This break occurred in January 1939, and in the same month Martin suspended fifteen of the union's twenty-four executive board members because they had decided to call a convention of the union.⁹⁵

These events led to an organizational split in the United Auto Workers. In March and April 1939 separate conventions were held by the two groups, the anti-Martin faction meeting in Detroit, the pro-Martin forces convening in Cleveland. *Workers Age* noted with some wryness that the claims of the anti-Martin group that the Lovestoneites had been the cause of the factionalism in the union had been shown false by the factionalism at the anti-Martin

convention, where three groups had emerged: Communist elements and Richard Frankenstein; R. J. Thomas and others who had recently come from the Martin faction; and the Socialists. *Workers Age* reported that the Thomas and Socialist groups had formed an alliance at the meeting against the Communist-Frankenstein group.⁹⁶

In April 1939 Homer Martin negotiated the entry of his faction of the union into the American Federation of Labor. *Workers Age* reported this event but carried no editorial comment on it. In any case, the split in the United Auto Workers ended Lovestoneite influence in the organization.

The Lovestoneites and the CIO

The Lovestoneites greeted with enthusiasm the increase in union organization which came in the early part of the New Deal and which laid the groundwork for the emergence of the CIO. They saw this as a vindication of their antidual unionist policies. Jay Lovestone, in a pamphlet published by the CPO in mid-1934, commented that "As a direct consequence of this fighting mood among the workers, the A.F. of L. has, in the last months, seen a great expansion of its organization, a vast influx of masses into its ranks. Spontaneously on many occasions, workers hitherto unorganized, without trade union experience, poured into the A.F. of L. by thousands." He claimed that "This is the third great wave of trade union organization passing over the country," and that "In the present wave, almost 2,000,000 have joined the A.F. of L. ranks in about one year, with the high water-mark not yet in sight and, with certain basic heavy industries like steel automobile, oil and rubber now in the first stages of organization."⁹⁷

When the Committee for Industrial Organization was formed under John L. Lewis's leadership right after the 1935 AFL convention in Atlantic City, *Workers Age* editorialized that "The organization of the pro industrial union forces, the gathering of eight international labor federations into the Committee for Industrial Organization, could not but serve to clarify and sharpen the issues."⁹⁸ Will Herberg saw these events as confirmation of the policies which the Communist Opposition had followed virtually since its inception. He commented that "For the Communist Opposition . . . the Atlantic City Convention meant not only the brilliant confirmation of the policy it had championed under great difficulties for nearly seven years, but also an opportunity of broadening the sphere of its activity and influence." He claimed that at the convention, the CPO "was instrumental in stimulating the beginning of the united action of the various left elements including Socialist Militants, official Communists, Lovestoneites and non-partisan progressives. These relations, established at the convention, are likely to prove of considerable significance in the days to come."⁹⁹

In February 1936 *Workers Age* went so far as to publish a speech which the CPO's old enemy, John L. Lewis, had given at a mine workers congress held in

Washington the month before.¹⁰⁰ However, in his column Jay Lovestone, while hailing the new militancy of the mine workers on behalf of industrial unionism, also called for a renewed struggle for the democratization of the UMW.¹⁰¹

As the split between the CIO and AFL widened, the Lovestoneites were strongly on the side of the former. George Miles wrote in January 1937 that "Everyone who has had anything to do with trade union organization knows how difficult, well nigh impossible, it used to be to interest the officialdom of the A.F. of L. in the problems of organization, especially in completely unorganized fields or industries . . . This attitude of profound apathy had to be and was destroyed in order that a fight for the organization of unorganized, mass production industries could be begun within the A.F. of L. The CIO has revived the old slogan 'One for All and All for One' and has made it a living symbol of its energetic work."¹⁰²

As late as September 1938 the Lovestoneites were still indicating strong backing for the CIO. A front-page editorial on "Labor Day 1938" in *Workers Age* said that "Under the Committee for Industrial Organization, American labor has begun its new march forward. . . . Under the C.I.O. the new labor movement must wipe clear the slate of inaction and old-type conservatism. The new labor movement will make of Labor Day the occasion for the proclamation of labor's independence as a class, of its militancy and unity on the economic field, of its determination to victory against the enemy within and without."¹⁰³

In the early years of the CIO the Lovestoneites had some influence with the inner circles of the leadership of the new labor group. John L. Lewis and other CIO leaders sought cooperation in organizing activities from all groups willing to help, including the various radical factions. The Lovestoneites were included. On various occasions top Lovestoneite leaders conferred with Lewis and other leading CIO figures.¹⁰⁴

Lovestoneite Emphasis on Labor Unity

Although enthusiastic about the CIO, the Lovestoneites were uncomfortable about the growing tendency for the CIO to grow into a rival of the American Federation of Labor. Almost since their inception, the Communist Oppositionists had made a fetish of labor unity and of the need to maintain a single central labor organization in the United States. The development of the CIO militated against such unity.

At the very commencement of the CIO, the Lovestoneites sounded a warning against a possible schism in the AFL. In an editorial on the first AFL executive council meeting after establishment of the CIO, held in Miami, *Workers Age* commented that "Precisely because of the provocative nature of the Miami decisions must the progressive and left forces in the A.F. of L. NOT interpret nor take as a signal for a split, for secession from the Federation."¹⁰⁵

In the early years, the Lovestoneites blamed the tendency to split the labor movement on the AFL leaders. In an article entitled "Split in A.F. of L. Inevitable, says Green," *Workers Age* started by commenting favorably on the affiliation of the Amalgamated Association of Iron, Steel and Tin Workers with the CIO, and criticized the AFL leadership's negative reaction to this. It commented "Thus, at this writing, there appears to be no possibility of composing the differences between the craft and industrial unionists."¹⁰⁶

As the CIO was repulsed increasingly by the AFL and moved to establish itself as a separate federation, the Lovestoneites continued to insist on the need to maintain as much unity as possible. Will Herberg, writing in April 1938, after noting the CIO's decision to call a convention to organize as a separate federation, and saying that this was merely recognition of an accomplished fact, observed that division in the labor movement was "always a source of weakness." He noted approvingly that both John L. Lewis and President Whitney of the AFL's Brotherhood of Railway Trainmen had suggested establishment of a joint AFL-CIO council for legislative action. Herberg concluded "Now is the time to translate these ideas into actions; now is the time to establish a united front of organized labor!"¹⁰⁷ For the next few months virtually every issue of the Lovestoneite periodical carried articles or editorials stressing the need for labor unity, but by 1939 the Lovestoneites were tending to see the resistance to unity as coming principally from the CIO. A front page editorial in *Workers Age* on June 24, 1939 commented on Lewis's statement that AFL-CIO unity was "impossible," observing that "A painful shock of bewilderment and dismay must have been felt by millions of workers in this country" as a result of Lewis's statement. It went on to say that "The mass of the workers inside the C.I.O. as well as the A.F. of L. don't want to fight to a finish. They want unity as soon as possible."

Lovestoneites Veer Back Towards AFL

During the last couple years of their existence, the Lovestoneites' sympathies tended to veer back to the American Federation of Labor. We have noted earlier that Charles Zimmerman supported the move of the ILG back to the AFL. *Workers Age* also frequently reflected this change in the Lovestoneites' outlook. An April 1939 article on the CIO and AFL in New England commented that "It is becoming increasingly apparent in Massachusetts that the strength of the A.F. of L. is increasing and, with each gain, the corresponding loss of strength and prestige in the CIO becomes manifest."¹⁰⁸

Workers Age very strongly protested a move by the CIO to set up a construction workers union, arguing that in entering an already unionized field, John L. Lewis "has completely forgotten the original purpose and mission of the CIO."¹⁰⁹ An article about the same time urged the Gulf Coast branch of the CIO's National Maritime Union to join the AFL's Seafarers' International Union because of Communist domination of the NMU. During

1940 *Workers Age* carried several articles by George Meany, newly installed secretary-treasurer of the AFL.¹¹⁰

Several things help explain this shift of the Lovestoneites towards the AFL. One is an apparent conviction by the end of the 1930s that the CIO was offering more resistance to reunification of the labor movement than was the AFL. Another was the beginning of a relaxation of the AFL's resistance to industrial unionism (something in which the Lovestoneites believed very strongly) as shown by its granting of an industrial union charter to Homer Martin's faction of the UAW and by willingness of some of the old craft unions to begin on their own to organize workers on an industrial union basis.

However, undoubtedly the most important factors in the Lovestoneites' shift was revulsion against the high-handed way in which John L. Lewis and some of his associates dealt with the governance of the CIO and its constituent unions and frequent use of such methods on behalf of Communist and pro-Communist elements. Undoubtedly, the long-standing dislike of Lewis, dating from the struggles in the Mine Workers in the 1920s was only partially laid aside during the early years of the CIO. When Lewis and Sidney Hillman seemed to side with Stalinist or pro-Stalinist elements in union after union—UAW, Textiles, Furriers, Office Workers, Maritime, and others—this led to a growing hostility on the part of the Lovestoneites towards Lewis and the CIO.

In any case, for all practical purposes by the end of their existence the Communist Oppositionists had a mass following only in the ILGWU. It was this organization, which had returned to the AFL, which was to provide the means of extending the influence of individual leaders of the Lovestoneites long after they had ceased to exist as an independent element in the radical movement.

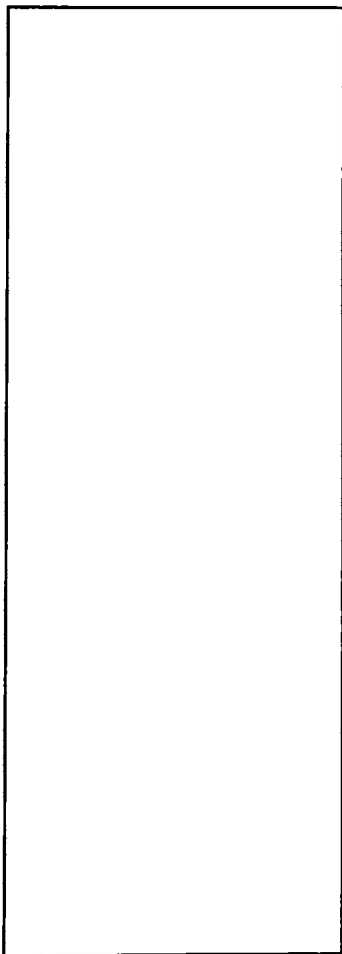
Controversies and Splits in the Lovestoneites

The Oppositionist Communist movement in the United States experienced a number of internal controversies and two major splits. One of the most significant polemics was in progress during the months preceding the dissolution of the group, and the decision to dissolve the group was certainly motivated at least in part by a desire to avoid animosities and personal schisms among people who had worked together closely for almost two decades.

The Bert Miller Split

The first schism in the Lovestoneite group came within a year of its foundation but did not have a major impact on the organization. It was led by Bert Miller, a member of the first National Committee of the Communist Party (Majority Group). Although Miller took very few people with him when he left, the motives for his break presaged future controversies among the Lovestoneites.

In his autobiography, Ben Gitlow commented on this first split. He said, "The Lovestone group, too, has had its troubles. The first split came when a group headed by Bert Miller sought to have the Lovestoneites united with the Committee for Progressive Labor Action, a non-Communist group headed by A.J. Muste."¹



Thus, Bert Miller, very early in the history of the Lovestoneites, broke with the basic concept of the group's being an Opposition Communist faction, rather favoring the formation of a party completely independent of the Communist movement. A comment in *Workers Age* a couple of years after Miller's split indicated other possible sources of his discontent with the Lovestoneites. It noted that "the ultra-Left course in the Party was begun by our group," and that "there was a centrist split in our group (Miller-Levitch) just as we were emerging from this ultra-left course."²

The Origins of the Gitlow Split

The first really serious division in the ranks of the Lovestoneites took place at the end of 1932 and beginning of 1933 under the leadership of Ben Gitlow. At the time of formation of the Communist Opposition, Gitlow was undoubtedly the second most important figure in its leadership, outranked only by Jay Lovestone. Gitlow had been a principal figure in the majority faction in the late 1920s, had been the party's candidate for vice president in 1928, and had been a member of the Majority faction in the CPUSA delegation to Moscow in mid-1929. After formation of the Communist Party (Majority Group), he had been its first secretary general.

According to Ben Gitlow's own testimony, he became convinced by the middle of 1932 that the position of the Lovestoneites toward the Soviet Union was mistaken. At that time Lovestone was in Europe and Gitlow wrote him of his doubts. His letter said, in part:

Another point upon which we must be very careful in considering is the question of the present economic collapse of the Soviet Union. I have been getting reports . . . of such gravity as to indicate an acute situation. . . . To hold that the present situation there is due to a fall in export prices, in my opinion, is taking too shallow a viewpoint of the situation. There are other factors involved, including the whole line, methods and regime of the leadership of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union."

However, Lovestone did not agree with Gitlow. In his letter of reply, dated from Berlin on July 22, 1932, he wrote his colleague:

Your remarks on the Russian situation: I still believe that our resolution was correct and is correct. Yes, I have quite a bit more information from critical high officials rather than from disgruntled, declassed Jewish peasants. . . . Finally, the crop this year, through no fault of Joe (Stalin) and through no virtue of Trotsky or Bukharin, happens to be a bad one. Without minimizing the difficulties and certainly without excusing Joe's factionalism, we must admit that if it hadn't been for the substantial achievements of the Five-Year-Plan based on a general correct line, the situation in the U.S.S.R. today in the face of the aggravating world market situation would be far worse.³

This exchange was only the start of the controversy. In September 1932 the Communist Party of the U.S.A. (Opposition) held a national conference at which "The Russian Question" was the main subject of discussion. Lovestone and others constituting the majority at the conference introduced a resolution reaffirming the CPO's support for a resolution "On General Line and Inner-Party Course of the C.P.S.U." which had originally been adopted by the Buro of the National Committee in the Spring of 1931. Gitlow introduced a relatively short resolution in opposition to that favored by Lovestone and his supporters:

That we instruct the incoming National Committee to restate our position on the question of the general line of the C.P.S.U. along the following lines:

1. That we reaffirm our position in favor of the Five Year Plan, which includes the speediest possible construction of heavy industry and the collectivization of agriculture as the prerequisite for the building up of socialism in the Soviet Union.

2. That we criticize the line adopted by the leadership of the Soviet Union in the fulfillment of the Five-Year Plan pointing out the errors made:

- (a) Thru the factional use of the Five Year Plan in the party of the Soviet Union and in the International. (b) The party regime. (c) The mistakes towards the peasantry in the collectivization of agriculture. (d) On the mistakes made in the collectivization of agriculture. (e) On the question of quality of industrialization. (f) On the question of light industry. (g) On the methods adopted for the correction of errors.

3. That we further criticize and point out our disagreement with the line of the leadership of the C.P.S.U. on the question of the Comintern.

4. That we point out the difficulties faced by the C.P.S.U. in carrying out the Five-Year Plan due to the backwardness of the Russian masses, the effect of the economic crisis, the acuteness of the war danger.

5. That we reiterate in spite of the errors and mistakes made by the C.P.S.U. leadership our support of the Soviet Union, its achievements, the example it sets for the world proletariat and our pledge to defend the Soviet Union in the event of war against the S.U. to the maximum of our ability and with all our resources as the center of proletarian revolution and the fatherland of the working class and oppressed mass the world over.⁴

The Gitlow resolution was decisively defeated. However, the CPO leadership decided to begin an intraparty discussion on the issues. This went on in the pages of *Workers Age* for several months. The first step was publication of the original Buro resolution of the spring of 1931 and the Gitlow resolution, as a basis for debate, followed in succeeding issues by articles by among others, Lovestone, Will Herberg, B. Herman and Herbert Zam for the majority, and Gitlow and Lazar Becker for the minority.

The original motion of 1931 gave a virtually blanket endorsement to the Five Year Plan and collectivization program of Stalin. It said that "we say categorically that the many difficulties faced (and the mistakes made) by the C.P.S.U. are to be associated with the upbuilding of Socialism, with the extension of the proletarian revolution, and with the strengthening of the

victory won by the international working class in general and the Russian proletariat particularly in the November Revolution." It also declared unequivocally that "The general line of the C.P.S.U. for Socialist construction in the U.S.S.R. is correct." Then, after offering some "positive and constructive" criticism of the policies of the Stalin regime, the resolution said that "While making the above criticisms of the present Party regime we reject unreservedly the proposals of the Trotskyites and others for so-called 'unlimited formal democracy' and the secret ballot in the C.P.S.U."⁵

Two articles published during this polemic best illustrated the issues involved: one by Jay Lovestone for the majority and one by Lazar Becker for the minority. Lovestone summed up the argument of the majority in his comment that "Even in their most aggravated form, the latest difficulties and hardships in the U.S.S.R. are, in general, to be associated with the travail and pains of socialist construction, of socialist growth and success. Obviously, the source of difficulties and hardships in the U.S.S.R. is in striking contrast to the source of suffering and misery in the capitalist world . . . the decay and breakdown of the capitalist social-economic order." In the Soviet case, Lovestone argued, "momentary food shortage may be the very price paid for providing the ways and means of completely banning hunger sooner rather than later."

In view of the fact that Stalin's offensive against the peasants had resulted in the government's depriving them of food they had saved for their own use, so that millions of peasants starved to death in the 1931-32 period, Lovestone's explanation of this problem is of particular interest. He argues that "Due to natural and uncontrollable causes there were harvest failures last year in the Ukraine and in the North Caucasus."⁶

Lazar Becker, in his criticism of the CPO's endorsement of the Stalin regime's programs argued that "It was not sufficient to say that the CPO endorsed the general policies of the 'the building of Socialism,' without looking at the particulars of those policies." With regard to the problems faced by the Soviet regime, he asked the question, "Are those difficulties only a result of 'pains of socialist construction, of socialist growth and success' (as Lovestone claimed) or that the degree of difficulties are to be associated with wrong policies and tactics?" He answered his own question, "In my opinion a number of mistakes, not mistakes in application of correct policies, which happens at the best of time, but mistakes in policies, were made." Later in his article, Becker indicated the policies which he felt were mistaken:

1. The deviation from the fifteenth party congress in relation to building of heavy industry, in the direction of Trotskyism.
2. The underestimation of the importance of the light industry, as a means of exchange of manufactured goods, for agricultural products and raw materials.
3. The uprooting of the capitalist elements—the almost total abolition of the private non-government production of the handicraftsman and the abolition of the open

market, without being ready to replace same by goods of Socialist factories thru government and cooperative apparatus.⁷

The culmination of this split was the resignation of Ben Gitlow and a few of his followers, including Lazar Becker, from the CPO.

The Zam Split

The second major division in the ranks of the Lovestoneites took place less than a year after the split led by Ben Gitlow. This time the principal dissident was Herbert Zam, who had been one of the principal proponents of the majority position against the dissidence of Gitlow. The specific questions on which Zam and his associates disagreed were different from those at issue in the Gitlow controversy, but Gitlow and Zam shared the idea that the Opposition should become much more critical of the Stalinists and should separate themselves more thoroughly from the orthodox Communist movement.

The issue between Herbert Zam and the majority of the CPO leadership arose during an intragroup discussion in preparation for the national conference which met from December 30, 1933 to January 1, 1934. When it issued the call for this conference, the National Committee of the CPO submitted two draft resolutions for discussion: that of the majority of the committee, and that of Herbert Zam, a minority of one in that body. The Zam draft was entitled "For a New Perspective for Our Group," and its key passage read, "... we must direct ourselves toward the development of forces for the establishment in this country of a new Communist Party to continue the struggle for international Communist unity on a higher plane." Thus, Zam was suggesting that the CPO give up the idea that it was a "faction of the official Communist movement in the United States and internationally."

In arguing for this idea, Zam noted that when the CPO was organized, it had a dual perspective: "(a) our efforts to win the party to a Leninist line would be successful and unity would be established in that manner, or (b) the C.P. thru its wrong line would continue disintegrating, would become a 'shell' and our group, having the correct line, would continue to grow and gain in influence. We therefore would become a party." However, Zam concluded, "Now, after four years of bitter experience, we must frankly declare that neither of these perspectives have seen fulfillment in reality."

Zam also argued that "A faction existing outside the party over a long period of time and carrying on independent mass work tends to develop into a party," and more generally, "the faction either prohibits . . . differences and grows narrower in composition . . . or it permits such differences and tends itself to lose its character as a faction and becomes a small party, regardless of the name it gives itself. This has been the case of the C.P.-O."

Zam followed the logic of his conclusions further. He argued that that the building of new parties should also be undertaken in other countries and

regions, saying that the Opposition Communists in Germany, Alsace, Switzerland, Sweden, Norway, and Spain had, in fact, formed separate Communist parties. Logically, Zam concluded, recognition that Opposition groups in various countries were in fact parties made logical establishment of a new Communist International. He argued that "Such an International will be a positive factor in the future of the working class and of the Communist movement if it is based on the lines laid down for individual parties." However, the new International "must necessarily exclude any group claiming to be a 'Russian section' and will necessarily be an International center for Communist parties in capitalist countries only." He offered no explanation of this "necessity."

Finally, the Zam resolution contained certain criticism of the functioning of the International Communist Opposition, attacking expulsion of the Swedish section, the hostile attitude of the ICO towards the leftward-moving Independent Labor Party of Great Britain, and failure of the ICO to participate in the conference of independent Socialist and Communist parties in Paris in the summer of 1933. It also suggested that the ICO was as dominated by its German section as the Comintern was by the Soviet party.⁸

The draft resolution of the majority of the national committee completely opposed Zam's perspective. Its key statement was, "The National Committee of the C.P.-O categorically rejects all proposals for the formation of a new Communist Party in Germany or in the U.S.A. or for the formation of a new Communist International. It especially rejects the political viewpoint from which these proposals emerge and declares that its fundamental objective still remains to unite and to rehabilitate the Communist movement in America, in Germany and on a world scale. The C.P.-O still remains an organized tendency in the Communist movement of this country, just as the I.C.O. is internationally."

After arguing that the German Communist Party had not "betrayed" the revolution and that the problem in Germany still remained the rectification of the policies of the German CP, the majority draft noted that "If there is no political or organizational basis for a new party in Germany, there is certainly none for a new Communist International." It argued that "Such an International would very obviously mean an International without the C.P.S.U. or else the International standing for the formation of a 'second' party in the Soviet Union. "Either alternative," proclaimed the draft, "is impossible from a Communist viewpoint." It added that "The rehabilitation and the reunification of the Communist International still remains our basic slogan."

Insofar as the United States was concerned, the majority draft said, "The official Communist Party still remains in its principles a Communist organization, in spite of its suicidally disruptive and sectarian tactics." Furthermore, "The official Communist Party is today more accessible than ever to the influence of the opposition."⁹

The subsequent discussion in the pages of *Workers Age* included articles by

Zam, Harry Connor, and Jose Rosen for the minority position, and Will Herberg, Jack Smith, M. Schwartz and others for the majority.

The position of the majority draft proved to be that of the majority of the CPO Conference. As a result, Herbert Zam and some of his supporters left the Communist Party (Opposition).

Later Careers of Gitlow and Zam

Both Ben Gitlow and Herbert Zam continued to be active in the radical movement for some time after leaving the Lovestoneites. Gitlow formed his own small group, which issued a newspaper, *Labor Front*. Early in 1935 both Gitlow and Zam took their small groups of followers into the Socialist Party, provoking a major controversy within Socialist ranks. Their admission had the support of Norman Thomas, who was at that time following a policy of trying to form an "inclusive" Socialist Party."¹⁰

Ben Gitlow left the Socialist Party soon after entering it and moved substantially to the Right. In 1940 he published an autobiography with the somewhat garish title *I Confess*. B. Herman wrote a review of it for *Workers Age* in which he suggested that "Elementary honesty would require that Gitlow begin his confession by an examination of his own errors. This he has failed to do."¹¹

Herbert Zam remained in the Socialist Party at least until the early years of World War II. As a Socialist he became a leader with Gus Tyler of what came to be known as the "Zam-Tyler Caucus" or the "Clarity Caucus," which from 1937 to 1940 constituted the left-wing of the Socialist Party. Zam also published a weekly column on foreign affairs in the *Socialist Call*, the official organ of the party.

Background of the 1940 Polemic

The last controversy in Lovestoneite ranks took place in 1940. It centered on the attitude to be adopted towards World War II, and particularly toward the role of the United States in that conflict. By the time the 1940 controversy broke out, the Lovestoneites had completely broken with the Soviet Union and Stalinism; indeed, they no longer considered themselves a Communist organization, as was shown by the fact that they were by then called the Independent Labor League of American (ILLA). They considered themselves a Socialist organization, basically Marxist, even Leninist. As the Second World War approached, the ILLA worked closely with the Socialist Party and various pacifist organizations in the Keep America Out of War Committee, the basic argument of which was that U.S. entry into the war would be the quickest way to bring Fascism to the United States. They concluded that whatever the evils of the Nazi and Fascist regimes, the British and French were still basically fighting to preserve their empires.

The ILLA leadership remained united in support of this position until the fall of France in May and June of 1940. A resolution adopted by the ILLA national convention held over the 1939 Labor Day weekend proclaimed that "This second world war is neither more nor less than the continuation of the first. It represents the same imperialist conflicts for territory, for markets, for spheres of influence and investment, continued anew after a brief breathing spell." It concluded that "THIS WAR IS NOT OUR WAR!" (emphasis in original).¹²

However, the events of the first year of the war provoked a deep split in the Lovestoneite ranks. With the fall of France, Jay Lovestone began publicly to question the group's position on the war, and in the months that followed, an extensive exchange of viewpoints appeared in the pages of *Workers Age*. Bertram Wolfe was the principal leader who continued to argue in favor of what had been until then the position of the organization.

The controversy developed into a full-fledged factional conflict. The majority of the national committee of the ILLA aligned itself with Jay Lovestone, and the minority with Wolfe. At least some statements published on the issues were stated in these Majority-Minority terms, particularly after publication of a "Draft Resolution on War," in preparation for what proved to be the final conference of the Lovestoneites.

The Position of Lovestone

Jay Lovestone more or less officially launched the controversy with a series of three articles on the front page of *Workers Age* on June 22, June 29, and July 6, 1940. These were replete with Marxist exegesis but made it clear that the leader of the Lovestoneites felt that his group needed to change its attitude. In his first article Lovestone started with a confession that "I must say very frankly that I never imagined the strength of the German military machine to be anything like what it has shown itself in the last two months." He admitted too that "Obviously the unfolding of such a factor—quantitatively and qualitatively—is of paramount import and affects vitally all movements, their problems, activities, strategy and tactics." He added that "What we want most as a result of this war is a social revolution. . . . But what we fear most—and what is today the most actual menace—is a Nazi victory, with its total destruction of all democratic rights and labor organization, with its liquidation of the national independence of many countries."¹³

In his second article Lovestone indicated that his group should not be neutral with regard to the outcome of the war. He argued that if the Allies were to win there would be "divisions . . . in their own ranks over peace terms. . . . This is a situation that is not as conducive to as horrible a peace as a victory of the Hitler Reich would bring." He added that in case of a Nazi victory "there would be no problem of divided counsels, of conflicting inter-

ests in the victor's camp. . . . Here only Hitler's fiat really counts. . . . None can deny that such a situation is the more likely to breed the more damnable and cursed 'peace.' " Lovestone's conclusion was that "We do not advocate an Allied imperialist victory, but we loathe still more a Nazi triumph. The only peace settlement we like and seek is a socialist peace. But in our desiring and working for such a genuine and lasting peace, we fully realize that actual conditions—bitterest reality—reveal the menace of a Nazi victory as the greatest obstacle—and main force and danger menacing our aims and goals."¹⁴

In his third article Lovestone came to grips with the specific questions which were facing his group and the United States in general. He first reiterated the need to "keep America out of war," for three reasons: so that "we may have some relatively uninfected and sane sector of the world available for playing a civilized . . . role in the era of reconstruction; to be better able to preserve our labor organizations and democratic rights"; and "so that there might be at least one genuine independent labor movement to counteract the trend of Nazification or act as a point of counter-attraction to what I have called the menace of Stalin's maximum program."

Following this insistence that the United States not enter the war, Lovestone supported U.S. aid to British resistance against the Nazis. He wrote that "We recognize that the United States is giving increasing material aid to Great Britain and we strive to do everything to have this aid accompanied by insistence on: (a) the preservation of democratic rights in England; and (b) a peace settlement free from indemnities and annexations, and (c) based on self-determination and national freedom for colonial and all other peoples."

In summing up his new position, Lovestone argued that "in our efforts to have socialism replace capitalism, we take over two great contributions made by bourgeois society to humanity. These contributions are productive efficiency and the democratic ideals of the great French Revolution. . . . We cannot build a genuine socialist society if we should lose or undermine either of these historical contributions." Therefore, he concludes that "One must reflect for a moment . . . to see what an unmitigable disaster a Nazi triumph would spell for the working classes and the progressive forces of all lands—for the socialist idea, for the future of humanity."¹⁵

Later, in articles entitled "Letters to an English Friend," Lovestone wrote: "You need American planes, ships, guns, food with which to beat back Hitler. Yet an American alliance could contribute towards a strengthening of the conservative elements, and even towards making more conservative the dominant labor forces in your country. Risk that it is, I am prepared to take it (American aid) in order to ensure the maximum possibility of beating back Hitler." He added that "At least, in the latter situation, we have a chance of counteracting and even defeating American political backwardness." On the other hand, "should there be a Hitler victory, which, in my opinion is hardly avoidable without American help, then none of us will even get a chance to

discuss or think about our mistakes of the past or about our lost possibilities."¹⁶

The Resolution on War Policy

The Lovestone point of view was embodied officially in a "Draft Resolution on War," which was introduced by Will Herberg and adopted in August 1940 by the National Committee,¹⁷ and the "Resolution on War Policy" which was passed by the final national convention, held on December 28 and 29, 1940.¹⁸ The differences between the two documents are basically editorial. However, one significant change between August and December was the removal of several pointed criticisms of the policies of the Roosevelt administration.

Both documents start with a section called "Fundamental Approach." The later document argued that "We cannot be satisfied with simply repeating the formula 'Socialism is the only question,' any more than we can in domestic policy. We must outgrow the attitude of ultra-radical abstentionism which still persists in the field of war and foreign policy. . . ." Both documents then went on to assert that the war was an imperialist one, but that "From the standpoint of the democratic and labor forces, a victory for Hitler's Germany would obviously be vastly more disastrous, and a victory for Britain vastly preferable, altho of course, even the latter will solve nothing fundamental. Only socialism will do that."

Both the draft resolution and the final one went on to argue that since it did make a difference who won the war, attitudes of Socialists in the different warring countries should be different. In Britain the Socialists should back the war. An interesting modification between the August and December resolutions was elimination of a passage, "This does not by any means imply . . . support of the existing government." In Germany, on the other hand, "revolutionary defeatism has a meaning in terms of the deepest interests of the masses of the German people," and in Nazi-conquered countries "It is the right and duty of the people to revolt."

The final resolution asserted that "we certainly do want Britain to be aided, and we are in favor of all American aid to Britain subject to the paramount consideration of keeping America out of direct military involvement in foreign wars." A statement in the August draft that "we object to certain administration measures to aid the Allies . . . because we don't want the U.S.A. to be drawn into the war . . ." was eliminated in the final version.

Two other parts of the two documents showed how far the Lovestoneites had evolved in their thinking. One stated that "We do not take a negative or abstentionist attitude on the problem of defense. We realize the urgency of the problem for the great masses of the American people," but warned against defense being used to get the United States into the war. The other asserted that "genuine defense against invasion or attack implies at many vital points the close collaboration of all countries in the western hemisphere," but warned

against any renewal of a "big stick" policy under the guise of hemispheric collaboration.

Section seven of both documents cited the "Danger of 'Appeasement,'" but the final one added a warning against appeasement of Stalin as well as Hitler. This was missing from the first draft.

Finally, both documents dealt with "Perspectives," urging the need for collaboration among surviving labor movements, to help labor and socialist undergrounds in Europe, including Germany, and the need "for the international labor movement . . . to prepare its own world peace program."

Bertram Wolfe's Dissent

During the summer and fall of 1940, Bertram Wolfe wrote a number of articles opposing the position of Lovestone and his supporters. The first two of these pieces bore the editorial note that "they represent the views of the writer himself and not necessarily those of this paper or of the I.L.L.A.," a strange comment to accompany articles by the second most important figure in the organization.

Wolfe's first article set the tone for the series. It started off, "The second world war is the continuation of the first. Both of them are the result of the rapid decay of capitalism," characterized by:

Growing monopoly. Displacement of the free movement of goods, materials, men and private property by monopoly, by government regulation of the flow of capital and movement of human beings . . .

Trend of a few powerful countries to monopolize whole regions of the earth under their hegemony; failure of the masses to develop a socialist economic unity of a continent like Europe strengthened the trend to economic organization of Europe into a single unit from above. The decaying capitalist world shaping up, temporarily at least, into a German-dominated Europe, a Japan-dominated Far East, and a United States-dominated North and South America.

Trend to the fusion of government with business, in which business is subordinated to the contest for control of these vast spheres of influence. The biggest business men and financiers, at some stages, and in some lands, thereby get a larger control of government. But in the long run, the mounting bureaucracy [sic] and armed forces, with its voracious appetites and right to first consideration in these gigantic struggles, makes the bureaucratic [sic] military machine more and more of a consumer of revenues, a preferred user of everything.

All great powers and even lesser ones manifest this same general trend. *The victory of none of them will tend to reverse this trend.*¹⁹

Wolfe maintained that "it is not sufficient to characterize the present war as imperialist. This does not complete the basic description of it." He added, "Nor is it correct to say that the defeat of Germany would mean the end of the totalitarian trend in capitalism. . . . It is true that a victory of Germany would

hasten and a victory of England slow up the trend to totalitarianism, but a victory of neither camp would reverse that trend."

Wolfe turned attention in his second article specifically to the United States. He said that "What we must fear most, and fight most in our own country is: a. The attempt to involve us directly in the European war. . . . b. The increasing speed of the trend towards totalitarianism here even before intervention. . . . c. The attempt to set up a continental Lebensraum under American dominance as a war block. . . . d. The attempt to enlist our feelings as completely on one side as to make all opposition to the above three tendencies impossible." He added that "Our main enemy is not Hitler but the American totalitarian trend."

In a further article Wolfe considered "the nature of fascism." He noted that there were various ways of interpreting fascism. "To some, fascism is Hitler. . . . To others, fascism is 'counter-revolution on the march.' . . . To yet others, fascism is a new economic, political and social order." All three points of view are used to support Britain in the war, observed Wolfe, as well as by leading ILLA members.

Both war and fascism, Wolfe argued, spring from decay. He noted that "We are living at a time when capitalism has completed its progressive development and is in full decay. For over half a century this has been so." Furthermore, Wolfe contended, only socialist revolution could end this process. "The only real antagonist that Germany has in its attempt to unify Europe from above by conquest is the movement of the masses for socialism; the only real alternative to a prospect of further wars, endless wars until Europe's culture and economy are utterly destroyed, is a Socialist United States of Europe." Therefore, "No burning hatred of Hitler, no indignation or hysteria, no war fever, no preference for his defeat rather than his victory, will permit us . . . to deceive the masses as to what is in store for them, regardless of who wins, until they take their destinies into their own hands and solve the problems created by the decay of capitalism and Europe's outgrown boundary lines in their own fashion."²⁰

In his following article Wolfe posed the question "Is This War Our War?" In answer, he noted that "For the National Committee majority, this war is, on the Italo-German side, a war of aggression, but a war against Hitlerism on the part of the Allies. They maintain that in the Allied countries, the masses forced the war on a reluctant ruling class." But, said Wolfe, "The picture is a false one. There are two wars being confused here." The first "is the war of the conscious masses against totalitarianism, one's native brand as well as that of the 'enemy' country." This war was one which all the ruling classes opposed but one which "we will have to engage in tomorrow and henceforward, regardless of who wins the other war, regardless of which side is victorious, or if stalemate continues. . . . To carry it on successfully, we must not confuse it with their war." He charged that the majority of the ILLA National Committee "by confusing the nature of fascism, makes the war . . . for socialism and

freedom coincide with the war of the camp which, on a world scale, represents merely the 'lesser evil.' "

Finally, Bert Wolfe dealt with aid to Great Britain, arguing that such aid was a fact already on a massive scale, and the ILLA was not likely to influence it one way or another. Furthermore, the ILLA's support for such aid would add little, since "the chorus" for such aid "has become an overwhelming roar. We cannot pretend that if we added our little voice to that overwhelming roar, it would even be heard or make any difference in the total volume of sound." He added that "All this would mean is that we would neglect our own special tasks, which we alone can do, and would cease to have any reason for existence."

Conclusions

The four internal controversies we have traced provide several insights into the nature and evolution of the Lovestoneites. Immediately apparent is the fact that the polemics took place in the open, and in the pages of the group's weekly, as well as in semipublic meetings. Both sides in each controversy were provided the opportunity to present their points of view to the broader membership and to the general public.

Another notable fact is that none of the polemics resulted in a witch-hunt against the losing group. No effort was made to expel Ben Gitlow and his followers, Herbert Zam and his, or Bertram Wolfe.

These controversies also reflected the changing nature of the group. The first three, centering on attitudes towards the Stalin regime, and the concept of being a Communist "Opposition," indicated the narrow orthodoxy of the Lovestoneites in the early years. In contrast, the issues in 1940 were those generally being debated in United States society at the time.

Comparison of the first three parochial controversies with the fourth one of a quite different nature, throws considerable light on the ideological evolution of the Lovestoneites.

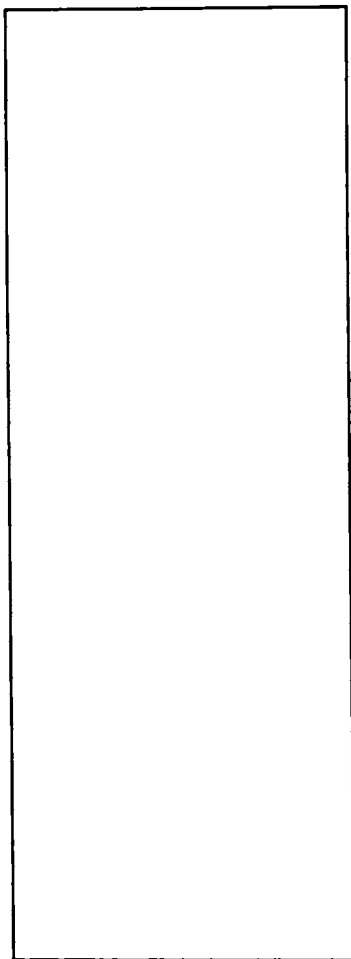
As long as the Lovestoneites regarded themselves as "Opposition Communists," a large part of their activity was devoted to trying to influence individual Communists and the Communist Party of the U.S.A. as a whole. Subsequently, when the Lovestoneites saw themselves as a separate political organization in competition with the Stalinists and with no longer any desire for ultimate unity with them, the Lovestoneites' attitude was one of frank and increasingly bitter hostility towards the Stalinists.

Early Appeals to the Official Communists

From their beginning as the Communist Party of the U.S.A. (Majority Group), the Lovestoneites launched various appeals to the official party. The first took place in November 1929, at the time of the first Plenum of the Central Committee of the CPUSA after the split in the party. This was the meeting which had the task of replacing those members of the hierarchy who had been purged after the defeat of the Lovestoneites.¹

The Communist Party of the U.S.A. (Majority Group) issued a "Declaration to the Plenum of the C.C.," which started by proclaiming that "Speaking in the name of

Lovestoneite Relations with the Communist Party



nearly one-third of the C.C. members, several Central Control Commission members and League National Executive Committee members, mainly leading Party and League functionaries, district organizers, District Executive Committee members and hundreds of removed and expelled proletarian Party members throughout the country, we herewith make the following appeal to the Plenum of the Central Committee." The Lovestoneites' appeal called for restoration to party membership of the leaders who had been expelled and went on to argue that "The Plenum must reject the revision of the principles of Leninism and of the Sixth World Congress by the ECCI and Secretariat which is taking place." It listed various of these "revisions," including "The anti-Leninist conception of the development of world capitalism (rejecting the basic Leninist viewpoint of the uneven development)," as well as "The opportunist sectarian estimate of the Third Period," and "The pursuing of a policy of opportunist sectarianism covered with ultra Left phrases in the leading campaigns of the Party." The document ended with an exhortation: "Comrades: Bolshevik unity of the Party on the basis of rejection by the Party of its present anti-Leninist line and the unreserved acceptance and execution of the line of the Sixth World Congress is an absolutely urgent necessity. Only such unity can save our Party from ruinous opportunism."²

The same issue of *Revolutionary Age* which published this document noted that the document "was of course never permitted to come before the Plenum itself, but was suppressed by the factional ring now running and ruining the Party."³

Soon after its organization, the Communist Party (Majority Group) also issued a pamphlet, "The Crisis in the Communist Party of the U.S.A." aimed principally at members of the official party. After making the point that the Lovestoneites had no intention of forming a "new" party, the pamphlet said that they saw no hope of changing the official party's policy by converting the new leadership. However, they urged "the mobilization of the Party membership and the revolutionary workers for the overthrow of the 'new leadership' and its destructive political and inner Party course."⁴

Official Party Persecution of the Lovestoneites

The official Communist Party leadership, of course, was completely unresponsive to any of these appeals. Its rejection of the Opposition's overtures went much beyond this, however, and violence was used quite liberally against the dissidents. Theodore Draper has commented that "The same strong-arm methods that they had used against the Trotskyists in 1928 were employed against the Lovestoneites in 1929, and with equally effective results. Party meetings were called throughout the country to endorse the expulsions and anyone who did not raise his hand to support the motion was summarily suspended or expelled."⁵

Persecution of the Lovestoneites by the official Communists continued during most of the existence of the Lovestoneite group. In mid-1932 *Workers Age* carried a headline "Stop This Hooliganism!" which told about Stalinists breaking up open-air meetings of the Communist Party (Opposition), Trotskyites, IWW and Socialists. It reported that the climax of this campaign was an attack on a CPO meeting in Brownsville, Brooklyn, where "workers, men, women and children, were sent scampering in wild disorder for their very lives by the 'official' Communist hooligans who brandished knives, iron knuckles and other weapons. It was an attack worthy of the coassacks."⁶ A few months earlier, the Lovestoneites had officially protested to Roger Baldwin, head of the American Civil Liberties Union, against official Communist efforts to break up not only their meetings but also those of other leftists.⁷

Further Appeals for Communist Unity

The Lovestoneites continued for many years to appeal for "unity" in the Communist movement, that is, for their readmission and for a change in the party line. They issued an "Appeal to the Seventh Convention and to the Party Membership" in 1930, which began, "In the name of hundreds of Communists expelled from the Party within the last year because of their disagreement with the new line of the Party, we appeal to the Convention and to the entire Party membership for readmission into the Party," and went on to catalogue the disasters which had overcome the party under its new leadership. These included a decrease in membership, destruction of Communist influence in various unions and in the Workmen's Circle, and loss of control of the large Finnish cooperative movement in the Middle West. After exploring the reasons for the Lovestoneites' expulsion, this appeal ended on a hortatory note:

CONVENTION DELEGATES!

PARTY COMRADES!

Let us weld our forces to unify our Party to overcome its crisis, to put it on the road to becoming a mass Party. To accomplish this the following steps are necessary.

1. The unconditional readmission with full rights of all comrades expelled for disagreeing with the present ultra-left course of the Party leadership—the cessation of the destructive 'enlightenment campaign' in all its forms.
2. The initiation of a free and thoro discussion in the Party with a guarantee of freedom of expression for all viewpoints.
3. On the basis of this discussion the calling of a special Party Convention at which there shall be the fullest and freest representation of all viewpoints and which shall re-examine the recent course of the Party and shall decide its future policies.

These are the simplest demands of Party democracy. Only those who are blind to the critical situation of our movement or who are afraid of a free discussion can reject them. We call upon the Convention to grant them and so to pave the way for the unification of the Communist movement of the United States!

For the Unity of the Communist International!
 Long live the Communist Party of the U.S.A.!⁸

About a year later, in May 1931, the Lovestoneites again issued a unity appeal to members of the Communist Party. It alleged that "The biggest problems before the whole Communist movement today is HOW TO REESTABLISH COMMUNIST UNITY," but commented ruefully that "Unfortunately the official leadership of the Communist International and our Party do not seem to be interested in reestablishing Communist unity." The appeal recounted that "The only talk of 'unity' in official ranks has been underhand, backstairs diplomacy, private negotiations with individuals, private promises of 'unity-specialists' in the leadership, circulation of rumors and gossip with the purpose of gaining factional advantage, of stilling the burning desire for unity and weakening the pressure of criticism by means of petty maneuvers." It then noted that the Comintern had ordered a "new 'unity' drive," but said that this amounted to nothing more than "more fake 'new turns,' some maneuvers with the life and death needs of the Party and the working class!"

Finally the Lovestoneites argued that "There is only one road to the unity of Communist forces which we all desire so deeply, and that road is THE REMOVAL OF THE BASIC CAUSES THAT HAVE LED TO THE SPLIT IN THE COMMUNIST MOVEMENT." They then repeated the three demands of almost a year before.⁹

In December 1931 the national council of the Lovestoneites sent an official letter to the central committee of the CPUSA and to the Trotskyites. This announced that "The Communist Party U.S.A. (Majority Group) is . . . in the face of the urgent need for Communist unity, taking the initiative in a move it considers an important step in the direction of unity," by calling a meeting in Labor Temple in New York City on January 19, 1932, to which the Lovestoneites invited one representative each from the CPUSA, the Communist League of America (Trotskyites), "the left wing in the trade unions," and "the left wing in the foreign language organizations." It noted that "These representatives will be given the floor for thirty minutes time in which to present the viewpoints of their organization on the important question of Communist unity."¹⁰ Needless to say, nothing came of this meeting.

In March 1933 the Lovestoneites issued a "Manifesto of the Communist Opposition to the Central Committee and to the Members of the Communist Party of the United States," in response to a statement of the executive committee of the Communist International in favor of a united front, after the advent of Hitler to power. Point 5 of this manifesto stressed unity:

If the new turn is to be genuine, it must be accompanied by a movement for the unification of the Communist movement, now split and divided. If the tactics proposed for so many years by the Communist Opposition are now to be adopted by the Communist International how can the mass expulsions of the oppositional Commu-

nists be further maintained? If the Communist Oppositionists are 'renegades' and 'counter-revolutionists' how can the tactics which they have championed for years now be adopted? In the present grave situation, we again appeal to the Central Committee of the Communist Party to take up the question of Communist unity, to appoint a committee to discuss with a similar committee of ours the unification of our movement on the basis of the restoration of party democracy, the readmission of the expelled and the calling of an emergency party convention.¹¹

The manifesto went on to urge unity throughout the Comintern, and to "strongly urge the immediate convocation of the Seventh World Congress of the Communist International" after "the previous readmission on a world scale of all comrades expelled for opposing the ultra-left course, on the basis of agreement with the fundamental principles of Communism and pledge to abide by party discipline rooted in party democracy. . . ."¹²

The Fourth National Conference of the Communist Party (Opposition), meeting at the beginning of January 1934 adopted a new manifesto entitled "Communist Party (Opposition) Call for Unity of Labor," addressed "To all members of the Communist Party! To all communist sympathizers! To all workers!" It stated that "Our call for unity in the revolutionary labor movement goes out especially to our comrades in the Communist Party." It then asked "How long will you, comrades of the Communist Party, allow the American and international communist movements to be broken in pieces by the stifling system of inner party life and leadership and by the sectarianism paralyzing our party in the face of countless opportunities for growth and influence." This manifesto exhorted the official Communists to "fight together for a return to the tactics of the first Four Congresses of the Comintern under the leadership of Lenin. . . . Let us join hands for unity in the revolutionary movement, for communist unity, as the first step towards unity of the working class."¹³

Nine months later, the Bureau of the National Committee of the CPO adopted a resolution on "The Change in Comintern Tactics and the Tasks of the Communist Opposition," which renewed the appeal for "unity" and listed as one of "the main tasks of the Communist Opposition . . . to renew our campaign for unity on the basis of party democracy and free discussion, fully appreciating the fact that unity can be accomplished only by a drive from below in the ranks of the official Communist movement."¹⁴

The 1932 Unity Negotiations

On at least two occasions there was actually formal consideration of the possibility of the Lovestoneites reentering the official party. The first took place early in 1932. On January 15, after some preliminary oral discussions, and on the suggestion of Max Bedacht and William Weinstone "on behalf of

the Political Committee" of the CPUSA, the Buro of the National Council of the Lovestoneites sent a letter to the political committee of the CPUSA.¹⁵ This letter was addressed "Dear Comrades," and it read:

We have been informed that the Political Committee of the Central Committee has decided to give consideration to the problem of reuniting the Communist movement in this country, and to put an end to the demoralizing state of disunity and disruption that exists today.

We wish to declare that we stand ready to do everything in our power to facilitate this work of unification in every way possible.

We suggest that a committee of ours appear before the Political Committee to discuss in a constructive and comradely manner the various problems arising in the reunification of our movement and in the reinstatement of the expelled members. We are prepared to appoint and send such a committee at any time the Political Committee signifies its willingness to receive it.

We assure you that we will take every Communist step leading in the direction of unity.¹⁶

No reply was received to this letter. However, it was apparently given at least some consideration by both the official CPUSA and by the Comintern. Ben Gitlow noted that Jack Stachel, upon returning from a trip to Moscow, said that the Comintern leaders wanted the question "reopened." Stachel offered to meet with Lovestone and Gitlow if the political committee of the CPUSA approved. However, it apparently did not do so.¹⁷

With the failure of the CPUSA leaders to reply to the January 15 letter, Ben Gitlow, Jay Lovestone, and Will Herberg, as the Secretariat of the CPUSA (Majority Group), wrote a further letter dated April 20. It read:

We have not as yet received a reply to our letter of January 15, 1932, signed by the members of our National Buro, urging that we get together to talk over arrangements for immediate Communist unity.

We desire to place again before you the question of the readmittance of the comrades in our Group, expelled over the controversies which have arisen in our Party since the Sixth National Convention.

We are anxious to put an end to the demoralizing state of disunity and disruption in the Communist ranks in the United States and elsewhere.

We reaffirm our readiness to do everything in our power to facilitate this work of unification in every way possible so that we can all work together united in the revolutionary struggle.

We are particularly anxious to hasten Communist unity in view of the acute danger of imperialist war against the Soviet Union and the growing possibilities for the revolutionary proletarian movement, as a result of the world crisis. We, therefore, urge that you appoint an authoritative committee to represent the Polit-Buro in conferring with us regarding the necessary steps to be taken to achieve full Communist unity.

With Communist greetings.¹⁸

This second letter did evoke a reply from the official Communists. In rejecting the negotiations suggested by the Lovestoneites, the official party blandly replied that there existed no "disunity and disruption" in Communist ranks, and there were no "controversies which have arisen in our Party since the Sixth National Convention."¹⁹

The 1934-35 Negotiations

There were further negotiations for unity in December 1934 and the early months of 1935 involving an exchange of correspondence between Earl Browder and Lovestone and at least one meeting between delegates from both sides. This series of discussions began with a letter from the Lovestoneite National Committee, signed by Lovestone, and dated December 11, 1934, to the Political Bureau of the official party. It said, "We address this communication to you as an appeal for united action on one of the most important issues facing the American workers today as well as for cooperation in bringing about a better political understanding between our organizations with a view to ultimate Communist unity."

Lovestone brought up a number of specific issues on which he thought there might be cooperation, including "the vital necessity of a mass movement against war and fascism in this country at the present time." But he added that "we should not be satisfied merely with cooperation on this issue. Never was the unity of Communist forces so essential as it is today, with the fruits of disunity so obvious." He then asked, "Would it not be of the greatest value if we could join in a common effort to bring about better political understanding between our organizations so as to pave the way to complete unity!" Lovestone insisted that "there is no disagreement on the fundamental principles of Communism," and added that "What separates us are very serious differences on questions of strategy, tactics and methods."

Lovestone then made certain concrete proposals: establishment of "a joint committee . . . to encourage and regulate the mutual discussion of the disputed questions," that discussion articles be carried in papers of both groups, and that there be open discussion meetings. Finally, he suggested "that a delegation of our National Committee be permitted to appear before your plenum so as to explain our proposals in greater detail," and that a CPUSA delegation attend the CPO National Committee meeting to be held shortly.²⁰

Browder replied to this letter, albeit in insulting terms. He started by addressing his letter "To the National Committee and All Members of the 'Communist' Opposition," and set the tone by commenting that "Surely there is no need to carry on any discussions on the first point" (of forming a mass movement to fight war and fascism), since the CP-controlled American League Against War and Fascism "represents millions of workers, farmers, students, intellectuals." He added that "Surely the League will not be broad-

ened by such discussions as Lovestone is carrying on." Browder concluded that "No discussion is possible with you on the united front, so long as you carry on such anti-Communist slanders and actions."

As to reaching a better political understanding between the two groups, Browder said that each was well acquainted with the other's positions, so no further discussion was required. Then, in capital letters, Browder wrote: "THE ONLY WAY IN WHICH ANY UNDERSTANDING CAN BE REACHED BETWEEN US IS BY YOUR GROUP ABANDONING THE ANTI-COMMUNIST POSITION AND FULLY ACCEPTING THE POLICIES AND TACTICS OF THE C.P.U.S.A."

Browder then explored the reasons behind Lovestone's overture at that particular time. These were the "the C.P.U.S.A. is now completely united on the basis of the line of the Comintern . . .," that "the Lovestone policies are becoming more and more exposed in the trade unions," and that the split-away of Gitlow and Zam from the CPO, and their subsequent entry into the Socialist Party raised doubts "in the minds of any honest follower of the Lovestone group as to where they are going, and increases the pressure within the Lovestone rank and file proletarian followers for abandoning the present position of the group and a return into the fold of the Communist Party." Two other reasons for Lovestone's approach to the CPUSA were also suggested by Browder: the refusal of the Socialists to engage in united front talks with the CPO, and that "the group more and more sees no basis for an independent existence."

Browder then set forth an ultimatum to Lovestone: "The way back to the Communist International demands: full recognition of the mistakes of the group, recognition of all the decisions of the Party and the Comintern, recognition of Party discipline." He ended with an exhortation to "those who want to make good their mistakes and recognize them, who show in practice they are willing to follow the line of the C.P.U.S.A." to come back. He noted that "The Party will inform its members . . . to extend a comradely hand to all such comrades who wish to take the road back to the Communist International."²¹

Lovestone replied to Browder in a telegram dated December 30, 1934: "Some very important points your letter replying our last communication need clarification. After serious consideration we propose you select Central Committee representatives to our Plenum to clarify matters. Plenum will arrange special session convenience your subcommittee. Strongly urge you to do so interest Communist unity. Please reply promptly."²² Browder replied on the next day with a short letter:

Your telegram just received. Our letter is entirely clear, so that there is certainly no principle question that requires debate before you establish your attitude on these matters. When you give a decisive indication of the direction in which you intend to move, then, if that direction is toward acceptance of our basic proposals, we will be

prepared to discuss the problem of how to carry them out, at your Plenum or after. This letter is delivered by Comrade Jerome, who is authorized by us to observe your discussion on the question and report back to us, if you so desire.²³

The next move in this exchange was a letter from Lovestone to Browder dated January 5, 1935, saying that Browder's reply had arrived after the full CPO Plenum had adjourned. However, Lovestone said that those remaining had decided to name a committee to meet with the CPUSA, and asked when such a meeting could take place.²⁴ Lovestone apparently received no direct reply, because he wrote a further letter to Browder, in reply to an open letter from the Central Committee of the CPUSA, published in the *Daily Worker* on December 29, 1934. He welcomed the CP's entering into direct contact with the CPO, having "apparently given up the position . . . that it is 'against revolutionary principles' " to do so. However, he goes on to say that he sees little reason for the CPO to be the one to admit to errors or to disavow its views, "when in many respects, you are beginning to approach them yourselves altho you have not found it possible openly to recognize this fact." Lovestone then noted that "In your entire letter you do not mention a single word about inner-party democracy or about the system of leadership existing today in the Communist International," and adds that "This is a serious omission, for, in a certain sense, it is here that the root of the matter is to be found."

Lovestone then suggested various possibilities for cooperation of the two groups in the unions and went on to say that "In brief, cooperation in the trade union field will become possible just as soon as you break with dual unionism all along the line and re-adopt Leninist trade union tactics, just as soon as you officially dissolve the T.U.U.L. and all 'Red' unions in this country, just as soon as you decide to throw your forces in support of the growing progressive movement in the A.F. of L. unions." Finally, Lovestone urged once more that there be a full exchange of views.²⁵

Although this exchange does not on the surface appear to have been very productive, it did finally result in a face-to-face meeting of representatives of both sides. Jay Lovestone and Charles Zimmerman met with the CPUSA's representatives William Foster and Jack Stachel. The CPO representatives put forth as conditions for reunification that there be six months of free discussion preceding a new party convention, with the decisions of that convention to be sovereign, and with the party then working out whatever relationship it could with the Comintern. However, nothing came of these talks.²⁶

Feelings of Inferiority to Official Communists

The oppositionist stance of the Lovestoneites sometimes reflected a feeling of inferiority towards the official party, regardless of how "correct" their own

line might be. An article by Paul Berg, as part of the 1932 preconference discussion, pointed this out. After criticizing certain actions which the Lovestoneites had recently taken, he commented that "These are deviations from our trade union line, they are hesitations and side-glances at the Party, or farther, speculating what impression it will make there." Berg went on to say that "we must not hesitate. We cannot win the favor of the Party chiefs by trying to ape them. Not even when they secretly flirt with us. We will win them only when we become a force in the revolutionary movement." Berg then commented on the attitude of many Lovestoneites, "individual members of our group, I know of many who are in mortal fear of doing anything or even saying anything because it might be misinterpreted as favoring the reactionaries."

Finally, Paul Berg sought to make clear his own position: "Now, I do not propose to ignore the official Communist Party. I mention that our policy of winning over the Communist Parties to our line is the only policy possible today. But I hold that gaining influence in the labor movement, no matter how much our policy may conflict with the official Party policy, is the only way of winning them over."²⁷

Oppositionists' Criticisms of Official CP in Third Period

As an Opposition Communist group, the Lovestoneites always remained highly critical of the official Communist Party of the USA and of the Comintern. However, the nature of the criticism changed as the "line" of the Stalinists was altered and as the thinking of the Oppositionists evolved.

During the Third Period—from 1929 to late 1934 or early 1935—the Lovestoneites reiterated their objections to the principal elements of the official Communist line. One example will serve to indicate the character of this criticism. This is an interview with Bert Wolfe in *Workers Age* on May 1, 1934 (page 5), reprinted from *The Modern Thinker*, which was running a series of interviews with leaders of various radical factions. One particular part of Wolfe's comments is especially relevant as indicating the objections of the Lovestoneites to the official party's position during the Third Period. He was asked, "What are your fundamental objections to the Moscow general line?"

Wolfe offered six basic points of disagreement. The first was that "Marxism is treated as a ritualistic creed, a ready-made solution of all problems by means of a few cut and dried formulae." In the second place, "The official movement substitutes romantic pseudo-revolutionary phrase-mongering, empty boasting and self-deception for realistic analysis." He elaborated on this by saying that "It isolates the party from the masses by proposals and slogans ill-adapted to real conditions and the actual state of mind of the masses, which two factors are the determinants of any sound tactics." The third criticism was that "The official party espouses the fatal tactics of dual unionism, draining

out all the revolutionary and progressive workers from the conservative unions into 'revolutionary unions.' Unions have to have a program broad and elementary enough to include the capitalist-minded, Democratic-and Republican-voting workers."

Wolfe's fourth criticism concerned the united front issue: "the party has abandoned the struggle for working class unity and united action of a split and divided proletariat. It has given up the united front. . . . They speak of 'united front from below' to confuse this abandonment, but 'united front from below' is only an invitation to non-party workers to support the party program, and has nothing to do with the united front."

Next Wolfe dealt with the internal situation within the Communist Party: "They have violated the Communist principle of democratic centralism by wiping out inner party democracy. . . . Inner party life is stifled, discussion of basic tactics prevented, leaders and officials appointed from above, questioners repelled and a real correction of mistakes and development of flexible, realistic, revolutionary policy rendered impossible." Wolfe went on, "There is a sycophantic, hero-cult, Stalin in the Soviet Union, and little Stalins like Browder in other countries. There is no collective leadership in the International. The Russian Party has a monopoly of leadership in place of being the first among equals. The parties are led by puppet leadership, kept in leading strings, their initiative destroyed."

Finally, Wolfe raised the "exceptionalism" issue. He argued that "Tactics appropriate to the Soviet Union are mechanically transferred to all countries, overlooking the fact that all other countries have basically different conditions and problems." He added that "Tactics are transferred like blue prints, the varied nature of objective conditions in each country, the different mood of the masses, the difference in its degree of development, and the relations of class forces are simply ignored."

The Popular Front Issue

The change in the "line" of the Communist International, and therefore in that of the Communist Party of the U.S.A., began in 1934 in France, with the formation of a united front of the Communist and Socialist parties. It culminated in the period of the Popular Front, confirmed in the seventh and last congress of the Communist International in the summer of 1935.

The Popular Front was something considerably broader than the United Front, which was, in the eyes of the Communist Oppositionists, an alliance of the Communists with the Socialists and other basically working-class elements. The Popular Front embraced a coalition of Communists, Socialists, and middle-class parties and groups, such as the French Radical Socialist Party. Although the Opposition Communists had for many years advocated the United Front, they were strongly opposed to the Popular Front.

The Lovestoneites attacked the new Popular Front line of the official Communists frequently in *Workers Age*, and Jay Lovestone published a pamphlet entitled *The People's Front Illusion—From 'Social Fascism' to the People's Front*. In it he summarized the objections of the Communist Oppositionists to the new Comintern and CPUSA "line." The pamphlet was directed principally at the members of the official Communist Party, starting out with the proclamation that "It has been a long time since so many members of the Communist Party have been in as questioning a mood as they are at present."²⁸

Lovestone put forth his version of the essence of the Popular Front "line": "The present world situation, it holds, is everywhere characterized by a struggle between democracy (i.e. bourgeois or capitalist democracy) and fascism. In some countries fascism has already won. There the job of the Communist parties is to do everything possible to restore this democracy (Germany). In other countries, the menace of fascism is growing in varying degrees (France, England, U.S.A.). Here the main task of the communists is to save capitalist democracy from the onrushing hordes of fascism. . . ."²⁹

To understand the error of this position Lovestone argued that it was necessary to go "back to first principles." He noted that "In the days before the Seventh World Congress, Marxists, Communists, never spoke of democracy in the abstract. They always realized that there is no such thing as pure democracy in a state divided into classes. Today, the official communists seem to have forgotten, or at least act as if they had never learned, that modern history knows two kinds of democracy: the capitalist democracy of the type we have in the U.S.A., Great Britain and France, and the proletarian democracy of the type we have in the Soviet Union."³⁰

Lovestone then went on to argue that the Popular Front policy was merely the former ultraleft line "standing on its head." Using the case of France to illustrate this point, he said:

In the days of the third period and social-fascism, in the ultraleft days of "class against class," the French Socialist Party (S.F.I.O.) was held to be so bad that *the Comintern could see no difference between the Socialist Party of Blum and the Radical Party of Herriot*. Then the French Socialist Party was a "bourgeois party." Today, in the ultra-right period, in the days of the "people against the two hundred families," the Radical Party has become so good that *the Comintern can again see no difference between the Radical Party of Daladier and the Socialist Party*.³¹

In both instances the Comintern "failed to measure in class terms. It, therefore, arrived at a false estimate in each instance."

Lovestone held that the idea that capitalism in decay could defeat fascism was an illusion: "Only a golden age of capitalism could end this menace of fascism, insofar as its objective roots go. . . . "But "no such age is in store for world capitalism," therefore, "to ask the proletariat to postpone the agitation

or struggle for the proletarian dictatorship until the danger of fascism is over, means to postpone it for a period as long as capitalism lasts. This can mean nothing else but giving up the struggle for proletarian dictatorship altogether and for ever."³²

Lovestone argued against the idea that the People's Front was the same as the United Labor Front which the Oppositionists had long advocated: "To confuse the united front of labor against the employing class interests or the capitalist government with the People's Front under whose very eyes, nose and ears the Spanish fascists prepared their armed insurrection . . . is the sheerest political idiocy."³³ The People's Front, he claimed, was nothing but the revival of "class collaboration under a new name." He argued that "It is the pre-war 'cabinet-socialism,' rebaptized; it is the old game of coalition with the bourgeoisie dressed up in a new uniform," but with one difference. "In the past, when coalition or collaboration with the capitalist parties was applied by the social democracy . . . the Communist Parties vigorously repudiated and fought it."³⁴

Lovestone criticized severely the actions of the CPUSA in pursuance of the People's Front policy. He was particularly critical of the decision "to work in the existing mass organizations" but without "any differentiation as to social or class composition among these organizations."³⁵ He also attacked official Communists' support of U.S. foreign policy, commenting that it was no "accident for the C.P. to drop the Leninist estimate of American imperialism—on the basis of the People's Front theory."³⁶

Lovestone then assailed the official Communists' support of the idea of a farmer-labor party. He asked, "If all of this can be secured through a farmer-labor party, then, why should anyone want to join or support a communist party?" He explained that in contrast to this position, the Labor Party, which the CPO supported "is the first historical progressive step on the part of American labor towards its separation, politically, from the bourgeoisie on a national mass and class basis."³⁷

Lovestone concluded with a chapter entitled "What Is to be Done?" in which he noted that "In our approach to the present false line of the Comintern, we are concerned solely with the fate of the entire working class—the only class that is historically capable of being progressive today. In this spirit we have made our criticism." He went on to say that "In the U.S.A., dropping the People's Front would mean, first of all, a return to a sound attitude towards the labor party movement." As a result, "Instead of chasing the tails of pacifist preachers and playing around with the Father Divine type of 'liberators of the oppressed,' the C.P. would throw its full energies into mobilizing labor in the struggle for a realistic social security program, for arousing labor to the dangers lurking for it in the sundry proposals for government interference with the trade union organizations."³⁸

The pamphlet ended on a familiar theme: "We are confident that, if the memberships of the various sections of the Communist International were

given half a chance to examine freely and critically the present dangerous tactical course of the Comintern, then this reformist, ultra-right policy could not and would not be maintained. That is why we have emphasized and will continue to emphasize the need for establishing genuine party democracy... throughout the sections of the Communist International."³⁹

Lovestoneite Electoral Support for CPUSA

Although considering themselves an inherent part of the Communist movement, the Lovestoneites were in practice very active opponents of the official Communist Party in many fields. They generally strongly opposed the Stalinists in the labor movement. They also fought against official Communist policies and leadership in such organizations as the American League Against War and Fascism, the American Youth Congress, the National Negro Congress, and the American Student Union. The Lovestoneites, however, did openly and consistently support the official Communists in election campaigns. They did so in the two presidential elections of the 1930s and in some others, not breaking with this policy until 1940.

In the congressional election of 1930 the newly established Lovestoneites endorsed the CPUSA candidates. An editorial in *Revolutionary Age* announced that "The National Council of the Communist Party (Majority Group) has decided to endorse the Congressional and State tickets put forward by the Communist Party of the United States and to launch a campaign to mobilize the workers for the support of the Communist Party ticket under the slogan of VOTE COMMUNIST." The editorial added that the Lovestoneites were not changing their criticisms of the Communist Party, but "We support the Communist Party because in the present election it presents the only ticket around which can rally all workers and farmers in opposition to capitalism and the horrors it brings to the exploited toiling masses."⁴⁰

Two years later, in the presidential election of 1932, the Lovestoneites came out very early to endorse the Communist ticket of William Z. Foster and James Ford.⁴¹ In the following year they again endorsed the Communists, this time in the mayoral contest in New York City. This action was the more intriguing because the official Communists' candidate was Robert Minor, one of the principal ex-Lovestoneites who had abandoned Lovestone in 1929 at the time of Stalin's excommunication of Lovestone.⁴²

In the 1936 presidential election, the Lovestoneites tried at first to bring about a joint ticket of the Socialists, Communists, themselves, and other leftist groups with Tom Mooney, the "class war prisoner" still in jail since his conviction in 1916, as their candidate.⁴³ Some of the unions under their influence, including the Knitgoods Workers of the ILGWU, endorsed this idea.⁴⁴ Mooney himself agreed to run with such wide radical support.⁴⁵

However, when none of the groups to which they were trying to appeal supported the idea of Mooney's candidacy, the Lovestoneites finally endorsed the Communist nominee, Earl Browder.⁴⁶

Attitude Towards Communist Party in Last Years

During the last three years of their existence as a group (1938-40), the Lovestoneites' attitude towards the CPUSA changed dramatically. They had come to regard themselves as a completely separate, rival, and hostile organization, and no longer had any desire to or intention of returning to the fold of the CPUSA and the Comintern. This change in view was reflected in the last two changes of their official name; first from Communist Party (Opposition) to Independent Communist Labor League, and then to Independent Labor League of America, finally giving up the word "Communist" altogether. The changed position of the Lovestoneites with regard to the Communist Party is summed up in two articles written by Will Herberg in mid-1939, which appeared in *Workers Age* under the general title "On the Political Nature of the Stalinist Party."

The first Herberg article started by saying that in most past and present parties in the United States it was reasonably easy to discern the "social interests" they represented and the "program and principles that reflect the aims and aspirations of those interests." Furthermore, in the case of radical and minor parties, "the basic political program plays an even bigger role, for these parties are generally not yet fully institutionalized or anywhere nearly as much absorbed in spoil politics." However, he argued, the Communist Party differs from this pattern. "Let us recognize this fact: There are no such things as principles, there are no such things as programmatic aims as far as the present-day Communist Party is concerned. The party is not out to promote any principles or to realize any program."

What then, is the *raison d'être* of the Communist Party? Herberg's answer is stark: "... the Communist Party is not a political organization in the usual sense of the word; it is not interested in 'communism,' however you may define it. It is almost entirely a power-machine; it is interested almost exclusively in gaining power, capturing control, extending and tightening its grip." This all-consuming desire for power explains the chameleon-like nature of the positions and programs of the Communist Party. Herberg commented, "Everything else is secondary, necessary perhaps to achieve the primary goal of power, but otherwise entirely without significance. To the dyed-in-the-wool Stalinist, bred in the all-devouring cult of the great god Power, the very notion that there may be principles and ideals of supreme value in themselves, in the service of which alone power gains whatever moral legitimacy it has, is genuinely foreign and unintelligible. Power is the great all-in-all."⁴⁷

Herberg began his second article by recognizing that "the question still remains: Power for what? What determines the lines along which the Stalinists

use their power once it is achieved?" Again, his answers to these questions are clear: "Here we come to the second fundamental difference that distinguishes the Stalinist party from the political party in the conventional sense of the word. For every political party in American history has served some American social interest, some class, group or element of the American people."⁴⁸

In contrast, "The Communist Party serves no such interest; it serves the Stalinist ruling clique in the Kremlin and no one else." Herberg adds: "The 'line' which it carries out, that is, the purpose to which it uses the power it so avidly seeks, is directly determined by the Stalin dictatorship in Moscow; at one time, the determining factor is the factional struggle in Russia; at another, the exigencies of Soviet diplomacy; but always the needs of the ruling bureaucracy [sic] around Stalin. This is so obvious it hardly needs reiteration." Herberg concludes that "In literal fact, the Stalinist parties in the non-Russian world are foreign agencies of the Soviet government. The 'social interest' that the American C.P. serves is not to be found in America but in Russia, and of course not in Russia generally, but in the Kremlin."⁴⁹

Herberg noted that "this has some serious implications. It means that the American Communist Party is really 'outside' the American labor movement and American social life generally. It is interested only remotely and indirectly in the needs and conditions of the masses in America, only to the degree necessary to promote the extension of power over these masses."⁵⁰

Of course, Herberg was faced with the historical fact the Communist Party of 1939 had its origins in the Communist Party which he and his group had long supported. He dealt with this issue, after a fashion:

Whatever truth there may be, and there certainly is a very great deal, in the assertion that the Stalin regime in Russia today is a direct outgrowth of the Soviet regime under Lenin and Trotsky and even of Leninist organizational conceptions before that, it is certainly not true that the Stalinist power-machine of today has any real connection with the Bolshevik party of Lenin's conception, with its almost fanatical devotion to ideology and principle. That Stalinist party of today is entirely a post-war development, and probably even more recent than that.⁵¹

Then Herberg made a comparison which would have been absolutely inconceivable for him to make a few years before: "There is an interesting analogy with another post-war social phenomenon. I refer to the different affiliates of German and Italian fascism abroad, such as the Nazi Bund and the Mussolinian Blackshirts in this country. . . . The Bund denies all connections, except a vague sort of sympathy, with Hitler and the Hitler regime in Germany. . . . The resemblance to the current Stalinist propaganda is plain on the face of it."⁵²

Herberg added a footnote to the effect that "In drawing this analogy, I certainly do not mean to identify Stalinism with fascism, as some have attempted. There are profound social differences which must not be over-

looked. . . .” However, the fact that he should make the comparison between the German-American Bund of Fritz Kuhn and the Community Party of Earl Browder was an indication of how far the Lovestoneites’ thinking had moved in only a few years.

The Lovestoneites’ new view of the nature of their old party had its effects on their practical political activity. Within the trade union movement, it drove them to ally themselves with right-wing Socialists and even the AFL leadership in cases in which the other alternative was the Communist Party. They worked with the Socialist Party and other elements of the non-Communist Left in the peace movement. They supported Norman Thomas instead of the Communist nominee for the first time in the 1940 presidential election.

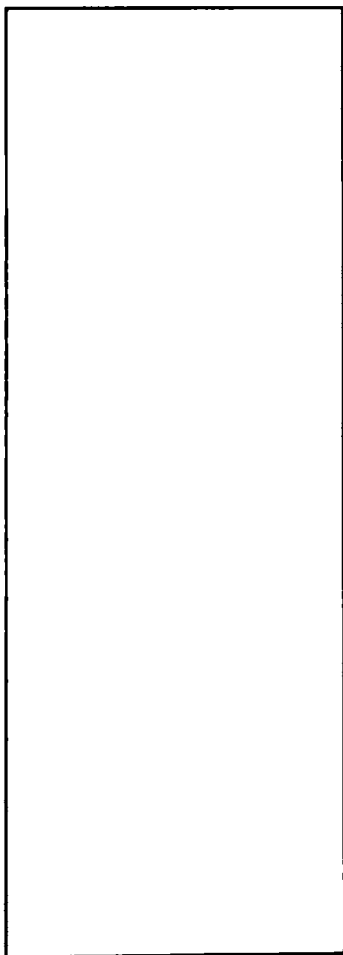
Undoubtedly, this significant shift in attitude was a vital factor in the Lovestoneites’ conclusion that there was no further purpose to be served by continuing as a separate organization. They had forsaken their original reason for existence. It made sense, in this context, to wind up their business, dissolve their organization, and allow its individual members to gravitate—if they wished to—to whatever other radical (or nonradical) group which seemed to conform to their ideas.

The Lovestoneites' Relations with Other Radical Groups

The official Communists were not the only faction whom the Lovestoneites were trying to influence nor from whom they were seeking to gain members. They were interested in most of what Herbert Zam at one point called the "groups and grouplets" on the far Left of U.S. politics.

There were some elements to which the Lovestoneites paid little attention. They—like most other radical groups—regarded the Socialist Labor Party as not to be worth cultivating. Nor did they bother with the Industrial Workers of the World, out of which some of the founders of United States Communism had come, but which by the 1930s was tiny and almost as sectarian as the SLP. The Opposition Communists also did not show much concern with the new and ephemeral groups making their appearance during the 1930s, such as New America and the Technocrats.

Four radical groups other than the official Communists were the most important to the Communist Oppositionists. These were the Proletarian Party, the so-called "Musteites," the Trotskyites, and the Socialist Party.



Rejected Overtures to the Proletarian Party

In the latter half of 1933 the Lovestoneites made serious approaches to the Proletarian Party (PP). For a short while they seriously contemplated the possibility of a merger of the two groups. The Proletarian Party had evolved from the Michigan state organization of the Socialist Party after World War I. It had been part of the Socialist leftwing, and considered itself Communist but had refused to become part of the merger of the Communist and Communist Labor Parties which ultimately resulted in establishment of the American affiliate of the Communist International.¹

A publication of the Proletarian Party of the early 1930s set forth its basic position. This document noted straightaway that "From its inception, the Proletarian Party openly proclaimed itself to be the basic communist party of America." It proclaimed the Party's position to be that it "does not think the means of production . . . can be taken over and held by the workers without first breaking the political yoke of capitalism and setting up a workers' state to prevent counter-revolution."

The declaration noted that "The Proletarian Party recognizes the Communist International as the only International worthy of the support of the workers, and, in addition, while critical of its errors, it recognizes the Communist International as the best International which the world's workers have as yet brought forth." With regard to the Soviet Union, the Proletarian Party program said that it did not regard the USSR "as the land of a new form of capitalism, as claimed by some alleged revolutionary parties . . . we see in the U.S.S.R. an advancing form of proletarian state socialism, an economic and political transitional form leading to communism." Finally, insofar as trade union policy was concerned, the Proletarian Party proclaimed that it "strives for a change in the structure of the unions to the industrial form as being a more efficient form for effective labor action."

On all of these points there was certainly similarity with the positions held at that time by the Lovestoneites. A major divergence was on the subject of "immediate demands." The PP document proclaimed that "first of all, the Proletarian Party is not a reform organization. It has no 'immediate demands' in its program. It holds that any immediate demands that can be obtained by the workers under capitalism can be procured through the action of the unions and the unemployed organizations. . . . The Proletarian Party asserts that capitalism is not worth reforming and further asserts that, while it can be tinkered with, capitalism cannot be fundamentally reformed."²

The Lovestoneites began their overtures to the PP with an article by Herbert Zam in the *Workers Age* on July 1, 1933. After noting that the United States was unique in having four main streams of Communist thought and organization—not only the official, Oppositionist and Trotskyist factions, but the Proletarian Party as well, he commented that the PP's "adherence to

the fundamentals of Communism cannot be challenged," and that it "organizationally is by no means the least of the Communist factions." He suggested that "In the struggle for Communist unity, which is a prerequisite to real leadership of the masses, new alignments are inevitable. When based upon real agreement and on principle, they should not only be welcomed but actively promoted. This is the situation which exists today as between the Proletarian Party and the Communist Opposition."

Zam then recited the points of agreement between the two groups: "on the fundamentals of Communism . . . on the attitude to the Soviet Union as a workers' state and the rejection of all conceptions which would see this state as the instrument for bringing back capitalism . . . both are opposed to the tactics of splitting the trade unions and other labor organizations . . . both are opposed to the conception of the American Negroes as a national minority and to the slogan of 'self-determination.'" Zam claimed that "The Proletarian Party and the Communist Opposition both believe with Marx, that the international revolutionary movement is 'international in content, national in form,' that the prime task of the Communists in each country is the solution of their own problems, arising out of the conditions in their own country, and are therefore opposed to . . . subordinating the policies of the Communists of any country to the political requirements and factional necessity of the Communists of another country."

Zam admitted that there remained some differences between the two groups, "on the nature of the proposed demands it is permissible for a Communist organization to advocate," and "as to party structure and methods of work," but added that "it is clear our agreements far outweigh our differences. . . ." He concluded that "The unification of the Proletarian Party with the Communist Party (Opposition) (if this desirable step is achieved) would by no means solve the problem of Communist unity. It would be an important step in that direction."³

Zam's article was followed by action. The National Committee of the CPO wrote the National Executive Committee of the Proletarian Party proposing that each party name a committee "for mutual discussion of those matters to see whether better relations between the two organizations could not be achieved." It also suggested an exchange of fraternal delegates at conventions each planned for the near future.⁴

However, the leadership of the PP, headed by National Secretary John Keracher, was not very interested in unity with the CPO. Furthermore, it had an internal fight on its hands at the time. Some party members wanted the party to have a new "activist" policy, and opposed the PP's traditional reluctance to make immediate demands. The convention of the PP was preceded by a purge of the party's largest local, that of Detroit, preventing the election of leading opposition figures as delegates.

The Keracher group, with a small majority at the convention, refused to

present the credentials of the three CPO members who had come as fraternal delegates. It also pushed through a list of "fourteen demands" to serve as the basis of unity with the CPO. These required that the national committee of the new group consist of fifteen members of the PP national committee, plus its secretary, Keracher, and only five from the CPO, to hold office for two years, during which no convention of the new united party would be held. The editorial board of the new group would consist of three members from the PP and only two from the CPO.⁵

The Lovestoneites' response to this was "An Open Letter to P.P. Members," the tone of which was reflected in the exhortations at the end of the document: "Comrades! Repudiate the Keracher clique! Stop giving it any support! Organize your forces for real, effective Communist activity! Come into the movement for Communist unity! Unite with the Communist Party (Opposition) in the campaign for a united, powerful Communist Party in this country and a united powerful Communist International!"⁶ Nothing further came of the CPO's overtures to the Proletarian Party.

The Musteites

The second group which drew the Lovestoneites' attention was the Musteites. Named after their principle figure, A. J. Muste, they were an indigenous radical group, originating at the Brookwood Labor College, in Katonah, N.Y. Brookwood was a residential "labor college" designed to train labor leaders in the elements of leadership and organization. It was established in the 1920s and dissolved in 1933. In its early days it had the support of a number of AFL unions, as well as of the Socialist Party, the Communist Opposition, and independent radicals of various kinds.

Associated with the college was the Conference for Progressive Labor Action. As Muste himself wrote, "in the beginning Brookwood and the Conference for Progressive Labor Action worked together, Brookwood of course emphasizing the educational job, and the C.P.L.A. that of organizing and strike activity."⁷

As early as 1931 Muste and his immediate followers proclaimed the need for transforming the CPLA into a new revolutionary Socialist Party. This was strongly opposed by both Socialists and Opposition Communists. It was not until July 1935 that this move came to pass, and the American Workers Party (AWP) was established.

The AWP was destined for a short life. Only a year after its organization, it joined with the Trotskyites' Communist League of America (Opposition) to launch the Workers Party of America.⁸ A year later the Workers Party accepted Leon Trotsky's "French turn," and entered the Socialist Party, but by then Musteism had become inextricably mixed with Trotskyism. Muste abandoned partisan political activity in 1936 and returned to the church and pacifism, which had been his original faiths.

Before examining the attitudes of the Lovestoneites towards Musteism, it is well to look quickly at the Musteite philosophy as put forth in the draft program of the American Workers Party, the basic document of the Musteite faction. It proclaimed that "The American Workers Party is a revolutionary party."⁹ However, "It should not be imagined that the workers will be able to achieve the conquest of power by getting themselves voted into office. The control over the electoral machinery is exercised by the capitalist dictatorship." Therefore, "to defeat the capitalist government and to transfer all power to the Workers' Councils, the workers must be prepared to use whatever means are necessary."¹⁰

As for the postrevolutionary period, "The new state form, developed by the revolutionary Workers Councils, will be based on occupational activity instead of territorial status . . . representatives of the workers, in field and shop, home and office, mine and railroad, school and laboratory, will be elected to serve on the Workers' Councils, which will be the basic political unit of the Workers State."

The draft program criticized existing radical groups. It argued that "The Socialist Party has frankly abandoned the standpoint of revolutionary struggle has renounced revolutionary objectives at the time when objective conditions have placed revolution on the world's order of business."¹¹ It noted that "the Communist Party of the United States holds title to preeminence in the field of professing revolutionary intentions."¹² However, "tragic failure . . . to raise the revolutionary standard has resulted not only in intellectual decay, not only in converting the party into a church singing litanies of praise to an 'infallible' leadership and intoning pious formulas . . . it has led to the abandonment of every vestige of revolutionary morality and decency. . . . Back of many of the deficiencies of the Communist Party lies the fact of its mechanical subordination to the Communist International."¹³

The AWP was unhappy with the existing Internationals. It proclaimed that "The American Workers Party rejects the Second International and its national sections as having proved themselves hopelessly non-revolutionary."¹⁴ Furthermore, "as has been conclusively demonstrated by its tragic failures in Germany and elsewhere, the Communist International, dominated by the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, is unfitted for dealing with these problems." Therefore the AWP proclaimed that it "stands committed to participating in . . . a new revolutionary International."¹⁵

The Lovestoneites and the Musteites

Relations with the CPLA were a disturbing factor within the Lovestoneite group during the first years of its existence. A Communist Party Majority Group statement in August 1931 indicated that "in the first weeks of our independent existence . . . our estimate of the C.P.L.A. did not differ essen-

tially from the official C.P. estimate and was entirely false. A re-examination of the problem from a Leninist viewpoint showed us the falsity of our position, and led us toward the adoption of the analysis outlined above," that is that "the rise of the C.P.L.A. undoubtedly reflected a leftward movement in the ranks of the organized workers and among certain layers of the lower trade union officials," but "the positive character of this manifestation could only be assured and serious confusion avoided thru close cooperation with the left wing forces. Signs of such cooperation have already begun to appear in the last few months. . . ." The statement added that the CPLA also had "elements of a false political orientation," which "comes definitely into the foreground" with its decision to transform itself sooner or later into a political party. The analysis concluded that "the general political aspect of the C.P.L.A. . . . was usually of a centrist, 'left' reformist character."

This same statement of the Lovestoneites noted that there had been an internal discussion as to whether members of the group should join the CPLA and a decision was made to remain separate. However, in spite of this, some Lovestoneites had joined the CPLA, bringing about their suspension from the CP (Majority Group). However, "as soon as this group of comrades entered the C.P.L.A. . . . a differentiation began to take place; Bert Miller, Levich and Lawrence began to move rapidly to the extreme right, while the rest of the comrades, under the leadership of Comrade Benjamin, took up a sharp struggle against social reformism and against Miller and his friends as well. The struggle of the comrades following Comrade Benjamin constituted good Communist service." Finally, the statement recounts, Benjamin and those following his lead had asked to be readmitted to the Lovestoneites, and they had been restored to membership. It further stated that "The comrades must be welcomed and drawn into all activities and share fully in all responsible work."¹⁶

The Lovestoneites continued to be very critical of the efforts of the Musteites to launch a new party. D. Benjamin, restored to the bosom of the CP (Majority Group), wrote a commentary on the first program issued by the CPLA. He noted that "The 'revolutionary' bubble of the C.P.L.A. leaders bursts and we see it for what it is—hot air! So it is only 'highly probable' that the capitalists will force workers to fight for their own dictatorship! So the C.P.L.A. leaders do not believe that revolutionary struggle is, in 'every case' necessary!"¹⁷

Herbert Zam also commented on the CPLA's May 1932 program, saying that "the CPLA program is surely the worst of any group claiming to be 'left.' The CPLA claims to be more to the left than the Socialist Party, but it is very difficult to find their leftness in its program. The program is much worse than the pretty bad program of the SP 'Militants,' in spite of the claim of kinship between the two." After offering some specific criticisms of items of the CPLA program, Zam wrote, "It must not be supposed that the above few remarks exhaust the shortcomings of the CPLA program. By no means! They are

merely samples of the general appearance of this program. It is a compound of confusion, ignorance and political cowardice."¹⁸

D. Benjamin had the task of criticizing the draft program of the AWP when it was issued early in 1934. He attacked the AWP's rejection of the Communist International, accusing it of having "taken over bag and baggage the vicious anti-Soviet slanders of Trotsky." He added that "the one political conclusion that can be drawn from this analysis . . . is that the C.I. and the C.P.S.U. have betrayed and must be destroyed. The Soviet Union is not a revolutionary factor strengthening the international working class movement, but is, according to Muste, an obstructive factor which subordinates international proletarian interests to the needs of its own foreign office." Benjamin concluded from this that "such an evaluation, completely unwarranted in fact, does not and will not win workers for the defense of the Soviet Union."

Benjamin was also critical of the AWP insistence that the conditions of the time required a new party. He commented that "we were always of the opinion that the Marxian position, that a party is based upon a class and represents definite class interests, was correct. Muste would have us believe that parties are formed not on the basis of class interests but rather on the basis of types of jobs to be done, on the basis of a particular economic and political situation."

Benjamin was also critical of the pro-American emphasis of the AWP. He noted that "The C.P.L.A. leaders make a fetish of Americanism and have developed a fundamentally wrong attitude toward the question of internationalism." He is particularly against the AWP program's assertion that "limitations" must be imposed "upon the idea of the functioning of a general staff of the International," and commented that "What is objectionable is not that the C.I. considers itself as the general staff but rather that in the absence of a collective leadership and in the presence of wrong tactics and methods of work it cannot be that effective."¹⁹

Lovestoneites and Trotskyites Before "Fourth Internationalism"

Although the Lovestoneites had played a major role in throwing the followers of Leon Trotsky out of the Communist Party less than a year before their own expulsion, their attitude as Communist Oppositionists towards the Trotskyites was markedly different from that of the official party. For the first few years they regarded the Trotskyites as being, like themselves, a dissident faction of the Communist movement. Even after Trotsky's proclamation of the need for a Fourth International, with which the Lovestoneites disagreed completely, they never came to regard Trotsky and his followers as the pariahs that the official Communists did.

The Lovestoneites did not usually devote much attention to the Trotskyites in the United States. However, they did frequently criticize the ideas and theories of Trotsky himself. The best statement of the Lovestoneite position

towards Trotsky and Trotskyism during the period before Trotsky's call for a Fourth International is to be found in the appendix of the pamphlet, *What is the Communist Opposition?* by Bertram Wolfe.

Wolfe argued that "... the Trotsky group has been even more sectarian than the official party," and "the very method of formation of the Trotskyist faction reveals its incurable sectarianism. Its groups in the various countries have nothing to say on the problems of the masses in the country in question. They have a fixed credo, a memorized and invariable litany which they recite on all occasions, to all questioners, as the solution of all problems."²⁰

Wolfe argued that Trotskyism was "inverted Stalinism," and that "Trotskyism in international outlook and method shares all the defects of the Stalinist system. . . . Like Stalin, Trotsky measures all groups and tendencies in other countries exclusively on the basis of their stand on the factional issues in the Russian Party. As Stalin has distorted internationalism in his factional interests, so [has] Trotsky in his." Both Stalin and Trotsky use loyalty to themselves as the basis of political judgment. Each insists on his personal glorification by his followers. And each engages in the worst kind of calumny against the other.²¹

Wolfe then attacked the Trotskyist ideological position. He declared Stalin right and Trotsky wrong on the "Socialism in one country" issue, and that, in Trotsky's postulation of the theory of "permanent revolution," he hid his "pessimism as to the forces of the revolution under a left-sounding cloak,"²² Wolfe particularly attacked Trotsky's idea of "Thermidor." He argued that "The central point of the entire political system of Trotskyism is its estimation of the class character of the Soviet power. Trotsky has the habit of substituting analogy for analysis. His *Thermidor* analogy is not only false but dangerous. *Thermidor* was the month in the French revolutionary calendar when Robespierre was beheaded, the speculator-reactionary government came into power, and the French counter-revolution began."²³

Wolfe argued that Trotsky's insistence that the advent to power of Stalin was the Soviet Thermidor led him into a variety of errors: to propose "the reintroduction of the secret ballot because of the fear on the part of the workers 'of the pressure of the bourgeoisie reflected through the apparatus'"; then to advocacy of strikes in the Soviet Union, and "finally, one wrong step leads to another, so that today the Trotskyites are proposing to imperil the unity of the Russian proletarian rule by trying to form a rival, and of course, conspirative, party in the Soviet Union."²⁴ This position was "a serious departure not merely from the strategy and tactics, but from the *fundamentals of Communism*," since "the Communist Party of the Soviet Union remains a Communist Party, the Soviet state a proletarian government both in property relations *and class rule*, and while we are seeking to correct its errors and restore inner party democracy, this does not for a moment justify a false analysis of the class character of that state."²⁵

During this period before Trotsky's advocacy of the Fourth International,

the Lovestoneites, in their discussions of "Communist unity," argued that the Trotskyites, like themselves, ought to be taken back into a reformed official Communist movement. Ben Gitlow wrote in May 1932 that "In moving for Communist unity our group has reached the conclusion that every effort should be made to include also the Trotsky group in the unification of the Communist movement, once it has proved it is ready to drop its Thermidor-ean charges against the Communist Party of the Soviet Union." But Gitlow noted that "... the Trotsky group has seen fit to ignore every communication and invitation to conferences for the discussion of Communist unity. . . . Such an attitude certainly does not help to bring the forces of the Communist movement together."²⁶

On at least one occasion there was direct contact between the two groups. James P. Cannon, the Trotskyist leader, gave a lecture on "The Program of the Left Opposition" at Lovestoneite headquarters in January 1933. *Workers Age* reported that three hundred "workers" attended, but were disappointed because Cannon had no program for the United States, concentrating only on a discussion of "The Russian Question."²⁷

Unlike the official Communists, the Lovestoneites remained capable of some objectivity in dealing with Trotsky's ideas. In a review of Trotsky's pamphlet "The Only Road," Will Herberg said that "In contrast to the worthless character of the pamphlet as a whole, the second chapter, 'Bourgeoisie, Petty Bourgeoisie and Proletariat,' in which Trotsky traces the political physiognomy of the petty bourgeoisie thru its main historical stages of development and analyzes its relations to the two major classes of society is positively brilliant and well deserves careful consideration."

The Lovestoneites occasionally protested against injustices done to Trotskyites by the Stalinists. In 1932 when the Soviet government deprived Leon Trotsky of his citizenship, *Workers Age* commented that "this is an act that is certain to have a dangerous boomerang effect upon the Soviet Union and upon the revolutionary labor movement of the world. . . . It is an act of shameful factional vengeance."²⁸ Later that year, when the Chinese government arrested Chen Hsiu-Hsu, a Chinese Trotskyist, *Workers Age* protested "the criminal silence of the official Communist press."²⁹

Lovestoneite Opposition to Fourth International Concept

The Lovestoneites were very strongly against Trotsky's suggestion after the advent of Hitler to power in Germany that the time had come to form new Communist parties (rather than mere opposition groups) in Germany and in other countries, even in the Soviet Union. The Fourth National Convention of the CPO, held on December 30 and 31, 1933, and January 1, 1934, adopted a resolution on the subject which started with the proclamation that "A very significant phase of the present realignment of forces in the international labor

movement is the transformation of Trotskyism from a tendency in world Communism to the ideological focal point of a new international centrist concentration. . . . Today it is Trotskyism that serves as the binding force, as the ideological platform, for the various groups attempting to crystallize an international organization 'in between' the Socialist and Communist Internationals. Trotskyism is rapidly becoming centrism in its contemporary classical form."

This resolution added that "The specific Trotskyist coloring of the new centrism is provided by its attitude towards the Soviet Union, which is the traditional Trotskyist position carried to its ultimate counter-revolutionary extreme. The Communist Party, the trade unions, the activists in the U.S.S.R. and all other organizations of the workers are declared to have been 'destroyed' by the 'Stalinist bureaucracy,' [sic] which is supposed to represent the interests of elements alien to the proletariat."³⁰

Trotsky's adoption of the Fourth International idea modified the Lovestoneites' thinking about Trotsky in several ways. An unsigned article in *Workers Age* in May 1934 noted that when Trotsky was originally expelled from the Soviet Union, protests were made by several foreign party representatives then in Moscow, including Bertram Wolfe, then the U.S. party delegate there. It went on to comment that Trotsky no longer demanded to be readmitted to the Soviet Union because "much water has passed under the bridge since Trotsky's banishment." Furthermore, "those who have in the past considered Trotsky's banishment as a crime and were in favor of his readmission can not propose that unconditionally today. The demand for his readmission must be made conditional upon his repudiation of Thermidor, civil war in Russia and the Fourth International."³¹

The Lovestoneites continued to see Trotsky's Fourth International concept as a move back in the direction of the Socialist International. This was particularly the case after Trotsky ordered the so-called "French turn," that is, that his followers should enter the Socialist parties to influence and if possible capture them. A first step in this direction in the United States was merger of the Communist League of America (Opposition) the Trotskyist group, with the American Workers Party. Will Herberg, in an article commenting on this merger claimed that "Never was an alleged international movement more truly the tail-end of a Russian faction," since the Trotskyites were motivated by the failure of their hopes that the Soviet economy would collapse, and by the realization that they would not be able to recapture the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. Hence, Herberg continued, the move to form a rival party in the Soviet Union was doomed to failure because "apart from reformist Socialism (the Second International) and revolutionary Socialism (the Third International) there can be no distinct and stable tendency in working class politics." As a result, Herberg concluded, "the Fourth International will inevitably become the 2½ International and gravitate towards Social Democracy, as the French turn indicates that it is already doing."³²

At least once during this period there was a bitter polemic between the Trotskyites and Lovestoneites. Late in 1935 the Trotskyist paper, the *New Militant*, published a report of factional fighting within the Lovestoneites' ranks, with different currents inclining towards the official Communists and the Socialist Party. (It should be said that there is no evidence other than this Trotskyist article of the reported in-fighting.) The Lovestoneites replied to this piece with a short article entitled "The Case of the Howling Dog," which said:

The above title is sufficiently accurate to characterize the evil smelling excrescence which passes for an article in the current issue of the *New Militant* on the alleged developments in the "Lovestoneite Group."

These die-hard "revolutionaries" who gnash their teeth because their offer to capitulate to the CP of Russia is not answered, are indignant because Lovestone and Wolfe are about to capitulate to the CP—so they say.

These would-be revolutionists who just went thru a split because a minority rejected their policy of merger with Social Democracy in France and plan to do the same here, are indignant because Herberg and Zimmerman are about to join the Socialist Party—so they say.

The article is one tissue of distortion and lies, rare even in these days when political dishonesty and factionalism are rampant. It is clearly a case where Jim Cannon is indebted to the bottle for his inspiration and to an imbecile for his facts.³³

Once the Lovestoneites had abandoned the Communist Opposition role, there took place a kind of reversal of positions between the Lovestoneite and Trotskyist groups. In the last three years of the Lovestoneites' existence, they were the ones unmitigatedly hostile to the Soviet Union, and they regarded the Trotskyites as apologists for it. They thus were prone to attack Trotsky and his followers for sins exactly the opposite of those for which they had been held guilty a few years before.

This change in position was clearly evident at the time of the Soviet attack on Finland at the end of 1939. Trotsky had supported the Soviet Union, provoking a split in the United States affiliate of the Fourth International. The *Socialist Appeal*, organ of the official Trotskyites, carried an editorial denouncing John Brophy of the CIO for attacking the USSR for its attack on Finland. In reply to this editorial, *Workers Age* published one of its own. It argued that "The Trotskyist formula these days seems to be: Criticize Stalin's atrocious policies but support his atrocious actions the moment he sets his Army in motion to enforce them. Criticize the invasion of Finland but support the Russian invader. And above all, heap abuse upon every one who dares to denounce Stalinism consistently and in words that pull no punches." The editorial went on, "Never was it clearer that Trotskyism and Stalinism are Siamese twins, the former being no more than a frustrated inverted form of

the latter." However, "fortunately, the present attitude of the Trotskyites on the new Russian imperialism is exposing their essential Stalinism so thoroly that it bids fair to wipe out completely the slim influence they may still have in certain sections of the labor movement."³⁴

The Lovestoneites and the Socialist Party

The Socialist Party was the largest non-Communist organization on the Left in United States politics during the lifetime of the Lovestoneite group. However, throughout the 1930s it was wracked by factionalism; the nature and positions of the various groups within the party changed, but factionalism became virtually a way of life.

The Lovestoneites' attitude towards a relationship with the Socialist Party changed fundamentally. As long as they considered themselves Communist Oppositionists, their stance towards the Socialists was of one type; during the last three years of the Group's existence, the relations with the Socialist Party were markedly different.

In the earlier period the Lovestoneites' position vis-à-vis the Socialists had a certain schizophrenic quality. Although the Lovestoneites rejected the theory of "social fascism," propounded by the Communist International and supported the United Front, at least in theory and to some degree in practice, they sought the ultimate destruction of the Socialist Party and were certainly very interested in exploiting Socialist Party factionalism.

Social Fascism and the United Front

The Lovestoneites continued to oppose the idea of "social fascism" as long as the official Communists were propagating it. Late in 1933 Bert Wolfe wrote that "The phrase 'social fascism' was invented in order to lump Socialist support of capitalism together with Fascist support of capitalism, thus justifying the rejection of a united front against Fascism. It did incalculable harm to the relations between the Communist and Socialist parties, between Communist and Socialist workers. It prevented the party from differentiating between Social-democracy and Fascism. Differentiation is the beginning of all understanding." Finally, Wolfe noted that "Its dangerously wrong character as an accurate formulation (it may have felt good as a term of abuse) has been frightfully demonstrated in Germany."³⁵

Complementing Lovestoneite opposition to the theory of social fascism was their backing of the idea of the United Front. Early in the Lovestoneites' existence, Ben Gitlow wrote that "The official Communist Party has forgotten entirely the tactic of the *united front*. . . ." He argued that the Communist Party, with five thousand members, couldn't make a revolution by itself,

needing support from "the decisive proletarian masses, sections of the farmers as well as some sections of the petty bourgeoisie." He maintained that the official Communists' slogan, "The Communists alone fight for the working class," was "the very antithesis of the views of Lenin," who had warned against sectarianism, and that "the united front is a tactic of growing Communist contact with the masses, and of establishing our influence and leadership among the masses."³⁶

The Lovestoneites sought to put their United Front theories into practice. On February 7, 1933, the Communist Party (Opposition) sent an appeal to the official CPUSA, the Socialist Party, the Conference for Progressive Labor Action, and the Trotskyites to join forces "for the purpose of bringing home to the American workers the real meaning of the Nazi victory for them and the danger of the spread of Fascist influence in the United States. . . ." The CPO appeal argued that "We are confident that, if you place the interests of labor above any secondary considerations, you will not hesitate to respond to this call."³⁷ The other groups not only hesitated, they appear not to have answered at all.

The CPO also made a direct overture to the Socialist Party. It sent Jay Lovestone and Charles Zimmerman to the Socialists' national executive committee meeting in Boston early in December 1934, with a letter from the National Committee of the CPO. This suggested that the Socialists set up a subcommittee to confer with representatives of the CPO "for the purpose of working out an agreement for cooperation," so as "1. To develop an effective movement against war and fascism on a broad and non-partisan basis. . . . 2. To effect the cooperation of our members and supporters in the trade unions for the furtherance of progressive unionism. . . . 3. To help build up a genuinely non-partisan labor defense organization. . . . 4. To stimulate the movement for independent working class political action in the form of a labor party."³⁸ The Socialists rejected these overtures in a letter by Clarence Senior, their national secretary, who commented that "in the opinion of the committee no national alliances such as you suggested would contribute to the strengthening of the labor movement at the present time."³⁹

The Lovestoneites rejected other kinds of "united fronts." Between 1935 and 1937 the Socialist leadership was seeking to convert their organization into what they called an "all-inclusive Socialist Party." They were willing to admit members of various dissident Communist groups and even to accept these groups in their entirety. It was in this period that ex-Lovestoneites Ben Gitlow and Herbert Zam, among others, joined the Socialist Party, and the Socialists made the disastrous decision to admit the Trotskyites as a body. They also made overtures to the Lovestoneites about the possibility of their joining the Socialist Party. Gus Tyler, then a leader of the Socialist left wing, was the intermediary for these negotiations. The Lovestoneites refused, saying that it would be impossible to work within the same organization as the Trotskyists. In retrospect, Gus Tyler felt that they probably would not have

entered, even if the followers of Trotsky had not been there, because of their view of themselves as Opposition Communists who had no place in a Socialist Party.⁴⁰

Socialist Party Factionalism

While continuing to advocate united front action with the Socialists, the Lovestoneites sought at the same time to exploit the intense factionalism within the Socialist Party. They hoped to gain converts in the process and ultimately to help bring about the elimination of the Socialists as an important element in the American radical movement.

In their franker moments, they did not hide their ultimate intentions with regard to the Socialist Party. In August 1934 *Workers Age* published a catechism, "Questions and Answers," in which Question 7 was "How does the Communist Party U.S.A. (Opposition) evaluate the Social Democracy and its American expression, the Socialist Party?" The answer was clear: "The sharpest basic antagonism in principle exists between the Communist Party of the U.S. (Opposition) and the Socialist Party of the U.S. The goal is the defeat of reformism and with that, the destruction of the reformist Social-Democratic Party as a Party."⁴¹

The Lovestoneites obviously had an opportunity to further this "goal" because of the divisions within the Socialist ranks. These splits arose from at least four different factors. The first, which contributed to the others, was an age gap which existed in the party. It had lost much of its youth contingent with the Communist split of 1919-20 and had recruited few young people during the 1920s. As a result the membership and leadership in the early 1930s was sharply divided between people in their middle fifties or older on the one hand, and people in their twenties and early thirties on the other. A second factor was the impact of the collapse of European Socialism, particularly of German Social Democracy with the advent of the Hitler regime. This caused the younger Socialists, in particular, to feel that there was need to "rethink" the traditional Socialist ideas and made them more willing to listen sympathetically to Leninist concepts.

There was also a sharp division between older and younger elements over the Soviet Union and international Communism. The older folks, with still bitter memories of the 1919 split, wanted nothing to do with the Communists in the United States or in the Soviet Union. The younger people, without these memories, were dazzled, at least for a while, by the apparent "success" of the Soviet Five Year Plans, which seemed to contrast sharply with the situation in the Depression-ridden capitalist countries.

Finally, after 1933 there developed different attitudes towards the New Deal. Older leaders, with more or less close ties to organized labor, particu-

larly in the garment trades, tended to look increasingly favorably on the New Deal, whereas the younger people regarded it as the worst kind of "reformism," serving mainly to save the capitalist system.

The factionalism began with emergence in 1930 of the so-called "militants" in New York. This was a heterogeneous group of young activists, fired with enthusiasm and some ambition, who began to buck the established leadership of the party in New York, where it had its largest membership. The New York Militants found considerable sympathy from other young Socialists elsewhere in the country, many of whom had been recruited into the party by the proselytizing of Norman Thomas at colleges around the country.

The first clash took place at the 1932 convention of the party when the Militants, supported by Norman Thomas, tried to substitute Milwaukee Mayor Daniel Hoan for Old Guard stalwart Morris Hillquit as chairman of the party. The attempt failed, but the incident generated much bitterness.

At the 1934 national convention the Militants and people to the left of them, with Norman Thomas's backing, pushed through a new Declaration of Principles. This meeting was probably the high point of left-wing silliness in the Socialist Party. The new declaration proclaimed the possibility of use of armed force to seize and hold power and called for "workers democracy" which the Old Guard equated—in part correctly—with Lenin's "dictatorship of the proletariat." A party referendum, which provoked an exceedingly bitter fight, resulted in approval of the new document by the membership.

The denouement of this phase of factional fighting came at the 1936 convention, where, although the 1934 Declaration of Principles was scrapped for a more moderate document, differences of opinion over the New Deal, relations with the Communists, and the concept of an "all-inclusive" party brought the Old Guard to leave the party to form a new group, the Social Democratic Federation.

However, this did not end Socialist factionalism. About the time of the 1936 convention, the Socialist National Executive Committee agreed to allow the Trotskyites to enter the party "as individuals." Once in, however, the Trotskyites did not act as individuals, but as an organized faction. For more than a year thereafter, there was sharp factional skirmishing between the Trotskyites and the Militants, who had meanwhile split into two groups. The Trotskyites were finally expelled from the party in late summer 1937, taking much of the Young People's Socialist League with them.

Even expulsion of the Trotskyites didn't end contention among various groups in the party. Until the outbreak of World War II, after which alignments over new issues took place and the old factions disappeared, the party was wracked by fights between a moderate group, still called Militants, and another element which fancied themselves, "revolutionary Socialists," and used the name Clarity Caucus. Ex-Lovestoneite Herbert Zam was co-leader of the latter group.

Lovestone's Critique of Socialist Factionalism

Before the 1936 Socialist split, the Lovestoneites kept close track of and reported regularly on the factional fighting in the SP. As early as January 1932 the *Workers Age* carried an article on a convention of the New York District of the Young Peoples Socialist League. It lamented the convention's resolution condemning "dictatorship" in the Soviet Union but praised "the small and less eloquent minority of Militants who voted for the resolution with the exclusion of the clause about dictatorship."⁴²

Later in 1932 an article by Jack Herbert commented favorably on a piece by Theodore Schapiro, a Militant leader, who rejected adherence to democracy. However, Herbert lamented that Schapiro had not endorsed the dictatorship of the proletariat, and attacked a draft statement of the Militants which supported democracy. Herbert concluded that "Life itself will convince honest Socialists of the necessity of a complete ideological and organizational break with Social Democracy and of unity with the Communist movement."

Jay Lovestone himself reported in *Workers Age* on the 1934 Detroit convention of the Socialists. He noted that the Militant group was the largest element there and said of it that "Politely put, in a political sense, judging by the sundry shades of opinion in its ranks, it might be called the rainbow group. . . . All colors of principle and policy went into making one picture of confusion." Of Norman Thomas's role, Lovestone wrote, "The 'steel rod' of the convention was Norman Thomas and the forces rallying around his personality-plus leadership. Most of these delegates had no idea what they wanted, but they wanted something new, and they felt their want keenly. Others felt that the party was inactive; they wanted to do something and do it in a hurry." Then there was "last, but numerically least . . . the Revolutionary Policy Committee, stronger in revolutionary aspiration than in numbers or experience . . . the RPC because of its lack of experienced leadership on the convention floor, because of its failure to differentiate itself sharply enough from the Militant confusionism of the Thomas-Hoan-Krueger triumvirate, certainly failed to measure up to the situation."

Lovestone's verdict on the 1934 Declaration of Principles was not flattering. He cited the passage dealing with possible use of force, and commented, "Were it not for the bitterness of the debate, one would be tempted to say, after reading and re-reading this paragraph, 'so what?' It has nothing to do with the Proletarian Dictatorship."

However, Lovestone saw some reason for hope from a Communist point of view. He said, "Let no one underestimate the significance of the fact that for the first time in nearly 15 years, political questions and, in a limited manner, fundamental principles, were discussed somewhat critically at an S.P. convention." He added that "The decisive question is: what can those of us who are Communists do to help eradicate social reformism in this country by winning

over . . . to Communism, the best and healthiest working class forces? . . . To the members of the S.P. honestly seeking more effective ways and weapons in the class struggle, we can only pledge a helping, comradely hand to aid them in getting to the true revolutionary path."⁴³

Subsequently, *Workers Age* reported extensively various incidents among conflicting Socialist elements, which ultimately led to the split of 1936. The tone of these comments, made by Lovestone, can be sensed by their headlines: "Now That the Referendum is Over—The Next Task for Revolutionary Socialists,"⁴⁴ "We Shall Never Be Moved—The Socialist N.E.C. Leans Toward the Right,"⁴⁵ "Now We Have Been Moved—Last Socialist N.E.C. Meet Marks Collapse of 'Militants.'"⁴⁶

Lovestone attended the 1936 Socialist Convention as a "Special Correspondent" of *Workers Age*. His first report was straightforward, with few snide comments or hortatory remarks.⁴⁷ However, subsequently he analyzed the convention from a more partisan viewpoint, commenting that "The ideological heterogeneity prevailing at the convention and gripping the party was rather crudely disclosed in the content of the election platform adopted. It smacks of pacifism, parliamentary cretinism, revolutionary aspirations, militant inspirations, technocracy and the Commonwealth Plan." He was unhappy about the Declaration of Principles adopted at the 1936 convention. "Obviously, the new Declaration is an even more expansive and flexible document which can only breed more chaos." Nor did he like the resolution on the united front, which "proposed a carefully worked-out set of obstacles to united fronts on national, state and local scales. But . . . it did not condemn in principle for eternity the idea of the united front." He concluded that "for those comrades in the S.P. who adhere to the principles of revolutionary socialism there is but one thing to do: Continue the struggle for such principles on a much more vigorous and more effective basis than ever before."⁴⁸

The Lovestoneites and the Revolutionary Policy Committee

The Socialist faction for which the Lovestoneites had most sympathy was the Revolutionary Policy Committee (RPC), which between 1934 and 1936 constituted the far Left of the party. It was a very heterogeneous group in which various strains of thought were visible.

The question was raised at the time whether various Communist groups, particularly the official party and the Lovestoneites, had some of their own people planted in the RPC. Clarence Senior, then national secretary of the Socialist Party, said many years later that he had been sure that J. B. Mathews, a principal RPC leader, was a Stalinist, and that Irving Brown and Francis Henson, also prominent in the group, were Lovestoneites.⁴⁹ Norman Thomas suggested on one occasion that he and his friends had suspected

Irving Brown of being a Lovestoneite plant.⁵⁰ Jack Altman, a major leader of the New York Militants, and after 1936 New York City chairman of the Socialist Party, also said that he had regarded J. B. Mathews as an official Communist plant in the Socialist Party and Irving Brown as an agent of the Lovestoneites.⁵¹

Jay Lovestone has insisted that the CPO did not send anyone into the Socialist Party. He said that the RPC had consisted principally of two elements: people oriented towards the official Communists and those against the official CP. He added that the latter group was headed by Irving Brown, and the Lovestoneites had worked with him and his group. Finally, Lovestone noted that some Socialist left-wingers finally joined the CPO openly, while others were told that they did not have to leave the Socialist Party in order also to be members of the CPO.⁵²

Francis Henson, who was later to play an important part in Lovestoneite work in the United Auto Workers, has said that in the RPC period he did not belong to the Communist Opposition but was very sympathetic to both the official Communists and the Lovestoneites, and that he conferred quite frequently with Lovestone. He thought that he was looked upon by them as being one of "their men" in the RPC. When he would from time to time confer with official Communists, Henson would be strongly rebuked by Lovestone and Irving Brown. Henson added that Brown was generally seen as the recognized spokesman for the Lovestoneites in the Socialist Party.⁵³

At various times the Lovestoneites commented publicly on the Revolutionary Policy Committee (and on its successor, the Revolutionary Policy Publishing Association—RPPA). In May 1934 Lovestone wrote in *Workers Age* that "In substance, the program of the R.P.C. . . . embraces the revolutionary Marxian teachings about the state, the proletarian dictatorship, the historical inevitability of the armed struggle, and a correct evaluation of the Soviet Union. Furthermore, it shows some grasp of the lessons of the victorious proletarian revolution in Russia and the bankruptcy of the principles of the Social Democratic movement the world over."⁵⁴ Lovestone wrote the author early in 1935 that "There isn't much difference in principle between the CPO and the RPC. That is true, but there are some differences between the two that are serious. We maintain that it is false policy for the RPC to continue hoping to transform the SP as such, into a revolutionary party."⁵⁵

Early in 1936 there appeared in *Workers Age* a review by "Arnold" of a new pamphlet of the RPPA, which Arnold said really presented three different positions. One was a strictly official Communist point of view, the second was Trotskyist in inspiration, and "the third position is presented by Irving Brown, William B. Chamberlain and Francis A. Henson" and with the exception of a few passages "where a little more clarity is possible on the role of the proletariat in continuing the war by the side of the Soviet Union after it has captured power in the imperialist country, there is little that any revolutionary Socialist or Communist can find to disagree with."⁵⁶

Latter-Day Relations of Lovestoneites with the Socialist Party

During their last three years the Lovestoneites' relations with the Socialist Party underwent a fundamental change. With their abandonment of the idea of being a Communist Opposition, the Lovestoneites no longer sought to "destroy social democracy." In a number of fields the Lovestoneites and Socialists cooperated more or less extensively.

One major area of cooperation was on the war issue. During 1938 the Socialist Party and the Independent Labor League of America were the two principal political groups involved in launching the Keep America Out of War Committee, which became the principal left-wing group opposing, at first the concept of "collective security," and after the outbreak of World War II, involvement of the United States in that conflict.

The SP and ILLA also cooperated with regard to the Spanish Civil War. Both were strongly opposed to the attempt of the Communists to seize control of the Spanish Republic and to suppress all who disagreed with them. Although the Lovestoneites' principal concern was with the fate of the POUM, and the concern of the Socialists was with the Spanish Socialist Party faction headed by Francisco Largo Caballero, they held joint meetings to protest the drive of the Communists to achieve absolute power within the shrinking Republican territory.

Furthermore, after the Moscow Trial in which Nikolai Bukharin was the principal defendant, the point of view of the Lovestoneites and Socialists with regard to Stalin's purges rapidly became the same. Even their basic analysis of the Soviet Union tended to become similar.

Finally, even in the international field, there was some rapprochement between Lovestoneites and Socialists. Although the latter did not leave the Labor and Socialist International, and the Lovestoneites did not abandon the International Communist Opposition, they both became involved with a new group, the International Workers Front Against War. The ILLA was directly affiliated with this group and the Socialist Party had fraternal association with it.

Hence, the Lovestoneites and Socialists became fairly closely allied during the last three years of existence of the ILLA. The Lovestoneites felt that this association was close enough to seriously contemplate the merger of the SP and ILLA. In 1939 *Workers Age* had an extensive discussion of merging the Socialist Party, ILLA, Social Democratic Federation, and even possibly the Trotskyite Socialist Workers Party.

The ILLA sent a letter signed by Lovestone to the Socialist Party convention of April 1940, proposing cooperation on a variety of issues, and adding that "there is the question of socialist unity . . . to heal the breach in socialist ranks resulting from the division on war in 1914, on the Russian Revolution in 1917, and on a number of other matters in the succeeding years. . . ." The letter confessed that "We have learned much, and know you have, from the

past quarter-century." Lovestone then set forth the possible bases of unity: "1. Socialism is inseparable from freedom and democracy. 2. Opposition to involvement of America in war and support to the anti-war movements of the warring countries. 3. Work for a united and democratically organized labor movement and independent political action of labor."⁵⁷

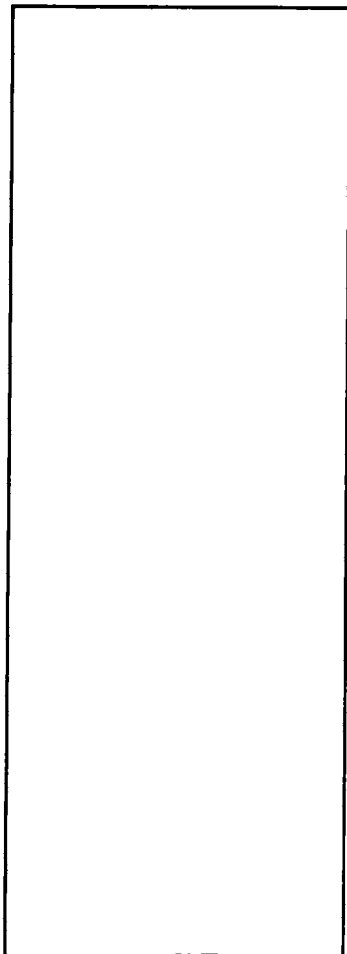
In the end nothing came of these proposals for unifying the Lovestoneites and Socialists. After the fall of France to the Nazis, the Lovestoneites became involved in a bitter internal struggle over the issues surrounding World War II, which led to the decision of the ILLA convention in December 1940 that the organization no longer served any useful purpose and should therefore be dissolved.

The Lovestoneites went through a drastic ideological evolution. They had one set of beliefs from 1929 until the last half of 1937. Thereafter, they went through a painful process of "soul searching" and revision of their basic ideas and by the end of their existence had come to believe in an entirely different set of ideas and even of values.

During the 1929-37 period, in which the Lovestoneites continued to see themselves as Opposition Communists, they had their differences with the official Communists but remained essentially orthodox Marxist-Leninists. They had "tactical" and "strategic" discrepancies with the Stalinists but had only one difference which they themselves regarded as a basic theoretical principle, so-called "American Exceptionalism."

The Lovestoneites' ideological position altered drastically once they had abandoned the role as a Communist Opposition, a change caused by their assessment of what had happened in the USSR, in Spain during the Civil War, and their experiences in the United States, particularly in the trade union movement. Once the top leadership gave up the Communist Opposition idea, virtually no one in the ranks dissented from the decision. However, it led the

Ideological Evolution and Demise of the Lovestoneites



Lovestoneites to begin to question all of their basic concepts and contributed to the ultimate decision to dissolve the group.

American Exceptionalism

Essentially, "American Exceptionalism" was the argument that each national Communist Party was best qualified to know the problems of its own country and to decide the policies which it should follow in its own nation. Bertram Wolfe, in his pamphlet *What Is the Communist Opposition?*, noted that "If we understand what the party leaders are driving at, we plead guilty to the charge. Yes, we consider that conditions in America are different from conditions in Germany or Spain or the Soviet Union. We are 'exceptionalists' for every country of the world! And in pleading guilty to considering the conditions of each country different from those of the rest, peculiar, 'exceptional,' we are in good company—the company of Marx and Lenin."

Wolfe then argued that "The fundamental aims of the Communist movement are the same thruout the world—the overthrow of capitalism, the establishment of Soviet power, the building of a socialist society." But "the methods of reaching that goal, the tactics to be applied at a given moment, are different for each country and even for each stage of the struggle in a given country."¹ He then cited a quotation from Lenin, and concluded that its meaning was that "slogans, solutions, proposals and tactics which are mechanically adopted for all countries at once, without regard to the peculiarities of each, are not likely to be good for any of them."

Wolfe went on to apply this idea to the United States: "A party that wants to sink its roots in American soil must understand American political and economic conditions. If it wants to influence and lead the American workers, it must speak their language, understand how to solve their problems, make proposals that meet their needs, embodied in slogans and adjusted to their development and understanding."²

The CPO leader then summed up by saying that "The Communist Party (Opposition) draws inspiration from the achievements of the Russian Revolution, but remembers that those achievements were the work of the Russian working class led by the most realistic Communist Party of the world, the Bolshevik party of Lenin." The CPO "proposes to imitate *the methods of Lenin*, not parroting, but analysis of American realities, and the making of the Communist Party of the United States . . . *an American Communist Party speaking to the American working class in its own language, of its own problems, and proposing tactics in this country. . . .*"³

The position on this issue taken by the Lovestoneites in 1929 was a marginal problem insofar as the Comintern was concerned. However, exceptionalism was to be revived after World War II. The Yugoslav party and government raised essentially the same question in defying Stalin: who was going to run

Yugoslavia and its party and government? Nikita Krushchev formally recognized the right of each governing Communist Party to "seek its own road to socialism." Thus, the "exceptionalism" argument of the Lovestoneites became accepted doctrine at least in theory, throughout the international Communist movement in the 1950s. Nevertheless, the failure of Soviet leaders to apply the theory in actual practice continues to be a major cause of dissension in international Communist ranks.

The Basically Leninist Position of the Lovestoneites

Whatever their differences with the Stalinists, the Lovestoneites did not break with the Leninist traditions. They continued to believe in (1) The Leninist concept of the "vanguard party"; and (2) The "dictatorship of the proletariat." Typical of the Lovestoneite defense of the vanguard party concept was an article by Bernard Herman on page four of the November 13, 1934 issue of *Workers Age*. Herman noted that the original Menshevik-Bolshevik break had been over issues of party organization and that "the struggle was sharp and of the greatest significance for the future of the Russian Revolution. It was the struggle between revolutionary firmness of organization, democratic centralism, the subordination of the lower organizations to the leading centre chosen by the membership of the party, and the exaction of the strictest discipline for members of the organization, on the one hand, as opposed on the other to the democratic looseness of organization of the Mensheviks." He added that "three decades . . . have fully confirmed the correctness of the revolutionary Leninist position on organization."

Bertram Wolfe, in a pamphlet entitled *Things We Want to Know*, dealt at some length with both the vanguard party idea and the dictatorship of the proletariat. After noting that in the United States people are brought up to think of " 'Dictatorship' as a term of abuse," he argued that "All the governments of the world, including England and France, Germany and Italy, the United States and the Soviet Union, are dictatorships in the sense (1) that they represent the dominance of some one class over the rest of society, (2) that they maintain and defend a given social order, (3) and that, while they use means of propaganda, education and persuasion, they depend ultimately on force for their maintenance and the maintenance of the social order they represent."⁴

Wolfe then differentiated among various dictatorships: "The chief difference between the United States, England, Germany and Italy on the one hand, and the Soviet Union on the other, lies not in the fact of dictatorship in the sense of class rule, but in the question as to which class is the ruling class." The first four are all "bourgeois or capitalist dictatorship," whereas "the Soviet Union . . . and it makes no bones about it, is a proletarian dictatorship—the working class owns the industries, controls the government (in alliance

with . . . non-proletarian toilers' . . .) and runs the government in its own interests as a government over and against the interests of the remnants of the capitalist and feudal landowning classes."⁵

As for the right in the United States, Britain, and France for the mass of the adult population to vote, Wolfe argued that "it is obvious that this is really an opportunity to choose within the narrow limits indicated above. . . . Consequently, democracy, in capitalist countries, is really, despite thin disguise, easily recognizable as capitalist democracy, i.e. democracy for the capitalist class in determining its own class policies and its manner of controlling the working class. This does not obviate the fact that such democracy for the capitalist class is at the same time dictatorship over the working class."⁶

Wolfe contrasted this to the situation he claimed existed in the USSR: "In the Soviet Union . . . there is also an interplay of dictatorship and democracy. There it is a question of democracy not for a small minority, but for the great majority, and of dictatorship, not over the great majority, but over a small minority." He went on to explain that "the forms of proletarian democracy are also superior: election directly from factories, regiments, collective farms; the requirement that soviet delegates report frequently to their constituents, must accept instruction as to how to vote . . . are subject to recall at any time." Wolfe concluded: "It is because Soviet democracy is democracy for the great majority that it can so frankly avow its character as a dictatorship (of the proletariat) over the small minority (the old possessing classes)."⁷

Wolfe also explained the role of the Communist Party: "A class cannot rule directly, every member of it, every day, saying his say on every question as it comes up, and every member of it devoting his full time to politics and government. Each class develops its own party or parties, a vanguard of its most politically conscious and politically active members. . . . The Communist Party makes no pretense to being a classless party. It is the party of the working class."⁸ Wolfe then offers his basic conclusion about the Soviet Communist Party: "It is obvious that the proletariat, and in a more limited sense the peasantry, exercise their dictatorship through the vehicle of the Soviet government, and under the leadership of the Communist Party. But the authority of the party is grounded not in coercion, but in mass confidence and mass support. The Party must judge the needs of the masses well, express them adequately, be linked up inseparably with the masses, constantly recruit their best and most advanced elements, deserve their confidence and win it afresh each day. . . . For this reason the party needs to explain not command, when dealing with the class it represents. It needs to preserve democracy within its own ranks and democracy for the masses within the government it leads."⁹

Although Wolfe evaded—or took for granted—the monopoly power of the Communist Party in the Soviet Union, the Lovestoneites frequently did not do so. In a review of a book by Sidney Hook critical of that monopoly Will Herberg argued that "The most elementary considerations of political common sense, the barest acquaintance with history, are enough to convince

anyone that, in real life and not in abstract speculation, a second party under the proletarian dictatorship is bound to become the party of counter-revolution." He then asked, "For what reason for existence could it conceivably claim other than fundamental differences in principle with the leading party? What justification for itself could it possibly put forward other than the denial of the revolutionary character of the leading party? What other role could it in the nature of the case play other than as the focus of every dark force of reaction and restoration?"¹⁰

The Lovestoneites and the Soviet Five Year Plans

The orthodox Communist position of the Lovestoneites during the first two-thirds of their existence led them to support a wide range of developments in the Soviet Union in that period, most notably the forced draft industrialization program of Stalin through the successive Five Year Plans. A very early statement on this was an article by Jay Lovestone which appeared in the first issue of *Revolutionary Age*. He wrote that "Today Socialism is being steadily built in the Soviet Union. . . . The foundation of Socialist construction is rapid industrialization, especially the planned intensified development of heavy industry. It is on the basis of a steadily socialized urban industry that Socialism in both town and country proceeds and for the successful organization of the new economic order they must both proceed together, side by side. Planned economy is an essential feature of Socialism which is free from the anarchy characteristic of the highest and strongest capital as well as of the weakest and lowest."

Lovestone then made oblique reference to the struggle between Stalin and Bukharin. After noting that the First Five Year Plan was put forward originally by Rykoff (a Bukharinite) at the 15th Congress of the CPSU late in 1927, he said that "Whatever differences there may have occurred were only over the methods of the application of the industrialization program and not over the Five Year Plan as such."¹¹ In thus glossing over the internal dispute in the CPSU over Stalin's alteration of the original Five Year Plan, he was covering up the nature of the debate in the USSR, and was taking the side of Stalin against Bukharin.¹²

In mid-1931 the Buro of the Communist Party (Majority Group) adopted a "Resolution on the General Line and Inner-Party course of the C.P.S.U." with a position which continued to be that of the Lovestoneites until late 1937 or early 1938. The relevant section of this resolution began: "Planned economy is an inherent feature of Socialist construction. . . . The Five Year Plan marks the transition of the period of reconstruction to that of Socialist construction; it is the first general, all-embracing plan of Socialist construction in the U.S.S.R." It went on to proclaim: "We regard the Five Year Plan as the most effective program for hastening the completion of another stage in

the development of Socialist construction in the USSR—the extension of Socialist revolution to the agricultural front (collectivization) and the rapid development of heavy industries (industrialization)."

It then stated that "The class relations in the U.S.S.R. proper, the fact that the U.S.S.R. is today the only workers and peasants Soviet Republic, the growing danger of a concerted imperialist attack against the Soviet Union, all these factors make imperative the speediest development of heavy industry and the maximum tempo in the collectivization of agriculture, as the basic foundation of Socialist construction in the Soviet Union."

The resolution defended the social costs of the Five Year Plan: "In view of the extremely great difficulties under which Socialist construction is proceeding in the U.S.S.R., considerable temporary strain and sacrifice by the Soviet masses is inevitable. In the light of the present international situation, the cost of the Five Year Plan, in money and momentary social hardships is entirely worthwhile." Finally, the Resolution proclaimed that "The general line of the C.P.S.U. for Socialist construction in the U.S.S.R. is correct."¹³

Revolutionary Age and *Workers Age* carried frequent articles on the supposed progress being made under the Five Year Plans. As late as November 1936 one of these was headlined "Soviet Russia Strides Forward to the Plenty of Socialist Economy."¹⁴

Lovestoneites and Labor Conditions in USSR

Throughout the Lovestoneites' period as a Communist Opposition, they insisted that the Soviet workers were experiencing dramatic increases in their standards of living. They also accepted without question the Soviet official explanations of new labor policy developments, such as a complete switch to piecework wages and the Stakhanovite system of speed up and individual competition among workers. In a capitalist economy they would have considered such policies the worst form of exploitation of labor.

A typical presentation of this Lovestoneite position was an article reprinted from a periodical entitled *Economic Review of the Soviet Union*. It began "The rapid development of industry in the Soviet Union during the past few years has been accompanied by continuous improvement in the working and living conditions of the population." It argued that both money wages and real wages, as well as available housing for urban workers, had increased dramatically during the period of the First Five Year Plan.¹⁵

An article reflecting Lovestoneite acceptance of changes in wage payments was published in *Revolutionary Age*, datelined Moscow, which noted that "the organization of brigades and communes led to a distortion of the piecework system and to a return to the policy of 'levelling' in the sense that all the earnings of a given brigade or commune were shared out alike, irrespective of individual skill and learning of the workers. It was then decided by the trade

unions to do away with the system of remuneration by brigades, so that each individual worker might be remunerated in accordance with his actual earnings. This led to the introduction of the system of progressive piece-work rates which are at present gaining wide currency."¹⁶

As late as the beginning of 1937, the Lovestoneites gave tacit endorsement to Stakhanovism by publishing an article by Ralph Vaill which praised the movement. He wrote that:

All of the elements of mass appeal were not present. . . . Japan though, by her threatening excursions in Manchuria, gave occasion to pull out the "war stop." It was pulled wide open, and . . . a Don Bas miner, Alexei Stakhanov, down in the dark shaft of the Irmino Coal Mine, in one shift mined 240 tons of coal when his "plan" called for only 40 tons. That was one September day in 1936. Almost simultaneously a ball bearing maker and a hammer man in a forge shop burst through this old level of productivity into almost unbelievable high ground. Stalin called these workers to the Kremlin. Held them up before the nation as "special people." . . . This was the birth of the "Stakhanovite Movement." Like a wild prairie fire it has swept over this land, capturing the imagination of even the most prosaic.¹⁷

Lovestoneite Support of Collectivization

The Lovestoneites also gave strong support to Stalin's efforts to collectivize agriculture. Two characteristic expressions of this support are sufficient to indicate its nature. Jay Lovestone, in the article in the first issue of *Revolutionary Age* already cited, wrote that "The absolute prerequisite not only for the maintenance of power in the hands of the proletariat but also for the construction of the new economic system is the firm alliance of the proletariat with the masses of the poor and middle peasantry. Socialism proposes the organization of industrial and agricultural production into an organic economic whole. . . . Without the development of agriculture in the direction of collectivization and socialization, the construction of Socialism cannot proceed."¹⁸

Will Herberg dealt with collectivization in a November 1934 article and took a line almost indistinguishable from that of the Stalinists. He wrote: "The uprooting of century-old institutions involved in the collectivization of agriculture naturally tended to bring chaos into that field of economic life. In the village, the First Five-Year Plan unleashed an intense class warfare between the exploiting peasant (the kulak) and the peasant masses, for the collectivization of agriculture meant the liquidation of the kulaks as a class, their elimination as an independent element in the Soviet economy." Herberg noted the costs of this and other aspects of Soviet economic policy: "The economic sacrifices made necessary by the First Five-Year Plan were heavy indeed and the social consequences—a certain straining of worker-peasant relations and moods of dissatisfaction of backward proletarian and semi-proletarian

strata—were inevitable.” To emphasize this point, he commented that “It would be the merest philistinism to sigh in regret or to whine in despair over these heavy sacrifices and costs.”¹⁹

Lovestoneite Backing of Soviet Foreign Policy

The Communist Oppositionists in the United States also strongly backed the foreign policy of the Stalin government. A pamphlet by Jay Lovestone, *Soviet Foreign Policy and World Revolution*, published in August 1935, came strongly to its defense. He argued that “Throughout the various stages of its foreign policy, the U.S.S.R. has pursued a consistent course in which we find certain ‘red threads,’ definite guiding lines.” These he lists as: “1. To maintain and consolidate the position and to extend the prestige and influence of the Soviet Union as the base of the international proletarian revolution. . . . 2. The U.S.S.R. still being alone, must strive to secure the maximum ‘breathing spell’ needed for continuing and strengthening the economic and political position already won by the international proletariat. . . . 3. Soviet foreign policy is at all times cognizant of the fact that the U.S.S.R. is situated between two infernos—a Japanese imperialist inferno in the East and a monster German-Polish war machine in the West. . . . 4. Because of the sharp conflicts, because of the acute antagonism among the imperialist powers, the Soviet Union may, should and must, at one time or another come together with one or more of these countries to ward off attack by others. . . . 5. Soviet foreign policy rests, in a measure, on a constantly changing balance of power and relations between various capitalist countries. The Soviet Government is prepared to sign nonaggression pacts, or mutual assistance pacts with any imperialist power, let us say for ten years, although while signing it, the proletarian government knows very well that these pacts may last only ten months or ten weeks.”²⁰ Furthermore, Lovestone says, “The strategy of Soviet foreign policy, while utilizing these divisions amongst the imperialist powers, is not based on these divisions as definite or final.”²¹

Finally, Lovestone listed as key elements in the allegedly consistent Soviet foreign policy: “8. The Soviet foreign diplomats are perfectly honest when they pledge non-interference in the internal affairs of foreign countries which have established relations with the U.S.S.R.” and “9. The strength of the Soviet Union in its international relations, the prestige of the U.S.S.R. in its foreign policy, is due primarily and directly in proportion to its own economic and political power.”²² In summation, Lovestone argued that “The Soviet government earnestly desires to be at peace and to appear as the champion of peace in the eyes of the masses. This attitude is rooted in the anti-imperialist character of the proletarian dictatorship.”²³

Lovestone summed up his and his organization’s view of Soviet foreign policy thus:

To conclude, the foreign policy of the Soviet Union is primarily a weapon of the Russian section of the international proletariat in the world struggle against imperialism. It is a weapon different from the weapons used by the workers of other countries because the Russian proletariat has already attained a higher degree of class consciousness, has already won power. In the use of this weapon the Communist Party of the Soviet Union must take into consideration the actual class relationships prevailing inside the leading imperialist countries, and differences amongst the imperialist powers, the strength of the international labor movement and the economic and military forces at its own command. This is the only sound, practical revolutionary approach. Abstraction without foundation in fact, shibboleths as a substitute for reality, must be discarded.²⁴

Lovestoneites' Insistence on Soviet Democracy

So long as they considered themselves Communist Oppositionists, the Lovestoneites insisted on the democratic nature of the Stalinist regime. They accepted at face value the "reforms" in the formal government structure carried out by Stalin in 1935-36. The first of these was alteration in the election laws of the U.S.S.R. to eliminate restrictions on suffrage of "all exploiters, capitalists, kulaks, etc. as well as former clergy, policemen, etc." *Workers Age*, noting these changes, asked the question, "Why can these limitations of the Soviet election laws now be eliminated?" and answered, "The decisive reason is the progress of socialist construction, the fundamental change in social structure resulting therefrom and the changes brought about in the ideology of the various classes."²⁵

The second "reform" was the so-called "Stalin Constitution." *Workers Age* reprinted an article from the periodical *International Class Struggle* of the International Communist Opposition, dealing with this. It began, "The new constitution of the Soviet Union is living proof that the proletarian dictatorship makes for the full development of the rights of the toiling masses," adding "even Socialists and bourgeois liberals, who as a rule, attempt to class the dictatorship of the proletariat and the fascist dictatorship of capital as one and the same thing are forced to recognize the democratic nature of the soviet state."²⁶ About a month later *Workers Age* even published a summary of a speech by Stalin on the new constitution.²⁷

Lovestoneite Attitude Towards Stalin and Bukharin

One of the most complicated aspects of the Lovestoneites' ideological stance during their Communist Opposition period was their relationship to Stalin and Bukharin. They had aligned themselves with Bukharin against Stalin in the Sixth Congress of the Comintern, and Lovestone and others had been personal friends of Bukharin; and as Right Oppositionists they tended to

be looked upon by others as followers of Bukharin. However they insisted that they were not "Bukharinists."

When Bukharin, Rykov, and Tomsky "surrendered" to Stalin early in December 1929, the Communist Party (Majority Group) issued a statement that "Our struggle has never been nor can it be an appendix to any individual or group in the CPSU, victorious or defeated. While we have always condemned the anti-Bolshevik methods used by the Stalin leadership in the struggle against Comrade Bukharin on the Russian questions, yet our struggle has never been based upon or associated with the line of Comrade Bukharin on these questions. Indeed, the Russian questions never became issues in our struggle." The statement went on to say that Bukharin's capitulation did not affect the basic questions at issue in the Comintern or the crisis in American Communism. It then commented, "The 'recantation' of Comrade Bukharin, if it should extend to international questions would, of course, deprive us of a prominent figure in the struggle for the Leninist line of the Comintern. For, although Comrade Bukharin never passed beyond the stage of passive resistance to the line of revision, yet he has always maintained such opinions as he expressed in a clear and staunch manner. But the struggle to save our Party and the Comintern does not depend upon one man, however prominent he may be."²⁸

A few months later *Revolutionary Age* reiterated this point of view. An insert in the center of the first page noted, "The crisis in the Communist Party of the Soviet Union has the same objective source as has the general crisis in the Comintern," but added that "neither the political issues nor the factional groupings, are the same. In no sense is the international opposition movement based upon the issues or groupings in the CPSU nor does it find its counterpart in any of these groupings."²⁹ When Bukharin was restored to limited favor in the Soviet Union, the Lovestoneites again gave him some publicity. In August 1934 *Workers Age* published without comment an article by Bukharin.³⁰

When one looks through *Revolutionary Age* and *Workers Age* between 1929 and late 1937 one is struck with how little attack there is on Joseph Stalin. There are disagreements with the hero cult centered on Stalin, but there are surprisingly few personal attacks on him, and occasionally the Lovestoneite publication even summarized articles by Stalin.³¹

In an early issue of *Revolutionary Age* Lovestone published an article, "The Crisis in the Communist International," which said that "There are some who hold Comrade Stalin, as an individual, responsible for the crisis. Without understanding this side of the question and recognizing that Comrade Stalin more than anyone else symbolizes the present ruinous course, and in full agreement with Lenin's estimate of his terrific destructive capacities, it is nevertheless clear that a deep international crisis cannot be traced to one man. The sources must be sought deeper." Lovestone added that the basic cause was in the "objective world situation," and specially "in the gap that has developed

between the victorious proletarian revolution and the 'rapid construction of Socialism in the USSR and the slow development of the proletarian revolution in Western Europe' (Lenin) and in the U.S." Another factor, he stated, was "the narrowing of the leadership within the CPSU and therefore of the leadership of the CPSU in the Comintern." He noted "the distortion of the leading role of the CPSU in the Comintern, the failure to develop a collective leadership in the Communist International and the initiative and self-reliance of the sections. Political leadership is one thing but mechanical clique domination is another. The first was exemplified by the role of the Russian party in the Comintern under Lenin—the other by this present role of the Stalin-Molotov leadership today."³²

Two years later, under the heading "The Hero-Cult At Its Depth!" an article in *Workers Age* cited ironically a quote from CI leader Manuilsky's report on the fifteenth anniversary of the Russian Revolution: "If the proletariat of the world is marching resolutely towards stormy events, towards greater class struggles, stepping into a second round of revolutions and wars, realizing its readiness for these conflicts—if all this is true, this is the historical monument of Comrade Stalin. . . . In other words, Stalin invented the class struggle!"³³

Lovestoneites and the Beginning of Stalin's Terror

Perhaps the most striking aspect of the Lovestoneites' Communist orthodoxy during their Communist Opposition period was their justification of the first Stalin purges, which were ultimately to be one of the basic elements causing the change in their ideological outlook. They endorsed the Stalinist explanation of the killing of Kiroff, leader of the Leningrad Communist Party and of the first of the Moscow Trials.

Kiroff was Zinoviev's successor as head of the Leningrad Communist Party. He was seen abroad as one of Stalin's principal lieutenants, but there is now evidence that he was, by 1934, part of a group in the leadership which was trying to modify Stalin's policies.³⁴ He was assassinated on December 1, 1934. His murder was followed by a roundup of hundreds of people, both old-time Mensheviks and Social Revolutionaries, and Communist oppositionists of various sorts. Many were summarily executed. In retrospect, at least, it is clear that Stalin's great purges began with the murder (or execution?) of Kiroff.

After Kiroff's death a *Workers Age* editorial started with the comment that "The official implication of members of the old Zinoviev opposition and even, it is alleged, of Zinoviev and Kamenev themselves, in the terrorist conspiracies centering around the assassination of Kiroff, is unquestionably the most startling event in the long and devastating cycle of internal struggles through which the Communist Party of the Soviet Union has passed in the last ten years or more. To all those who have followed the history of Bolshevism and the development of the Soviet Union with any sort of understanding, it must

have come as an incredible shock, momentarily paralyzing thought itself.”³⁵

When the next chapter in Stalin's massive purges began with the first Moscow Trial during the summer of 1936, in which Zinoviev, former head of the party in Leningrad and first chairman of the Comintern, and Kamenev, one-time head of the Moscow party organization, were the principal defendants, the Lovestoneites accepted the version of the Stalin regime. *Workers Age* carried an editorial which started with the statement: “The trial and execution of Zinoviev, Kamenev, Smirnov and thirteen others guilty of active conspiracy to murder the leadership of the CPSU and the Soviet Government has caused a profound stir, especially in the ranks of the class conscious labor movement.” It then proclaimed that “We are convinced that there is no adequate reason at hand to doubt the confessions made by the accused. We can see how there can be discussion as to the manner of the confessions, their grovelling character, but we do not see any reason to doubt the genuineness of the confessions.”³⁶

Lovestoneites and the Later Moscow Trials

However, by the latter part of 1937 and early 1938, the Lovestoneites were no longer able to accept the Stalinist version of the Moscow Trials, and this was one of the major factors which began to make them question the basis of their existence as a political group. One early indication of the impact of the purges on the Communist Opposition in the United States was an article by Lovestone on page 5 of the July 3, 1937, issue of *Workers Age*. By this time the second show trial—with Karl Radek, Piatokov, and Sokolnikov, and Stalin's own Chief of Secret Police Yagoda as the principal defendants—had taken place, and the purge in the top Red Army leadership had been announced. Lovestone started by saying that “Even the most obedient and devout of official communists must be somewhat bewildered by the latest events in the USSR, and we, who have been for years in opposition to the Stalin regime in the Comintern and to the entire hero-cult theory and practice that has afflicted the CPSU, do not hesitate to declare that we are profoundly disturbed by these events.” He then said that “I state frankly that my present ideas on the latest Russian events are tentative, incomplete, and therefore subject to alteration.”

Lovestone could no longer accept the official Stalin account of the purges: “I personally reject the explanation of all these events given by Stalin and his supporters. This explanation is unacceptable to me on the ground that it is too simple and much too sordid.” He was unable to accept the Stalin charges that not only oppositionists, but many of Stalin's own followers had become conspirators with the Nazis: “With all my criticism of Stalin's regime, I do not think it ever was, or is today, of a sort that would, gradually or suddenly, produce the transformation of old Bolsheviks into Nazis.”

His tentative conclusions about the purges still by no means involved a complete break with Stalin or a repudiation of the Lovestoneites' own past positions. He commented that "There has been a decisive improvement in the economic conditions of the U.S.S.R., the socialist base of Soviet economy has been strengthened tremendously." As a result, the expectations of the Soviet masses had been raised, generating considerable discontent. Such discontent had had its impact, obviously, on the Soviet Communist Party. Lovestone said: "In a land of the proletarian dictatorship where there is only one political party in legal existence, it is unavoidable that these new strivings, that this discontent among the masses, should serve as sources of pressure on the Communist Party and should manifest themselves also inside and thruout the life of the party itself."

He argued that "The great mass of Soviet workers and farmers were more than ready to tighten their belts and put themselves on food rations in order to assure the success of the drive for the establishment of a socialist foundation of Soviet economy . . . even to put themselves on mental and spiritual rations—to swallow for a time . . . even the most disgusting crudities of the Stalin regime as a system of leadership in the C.P.S.U. and in the Comintern."

However, the situation had changed, Lovestone maintained: "At this point we must reckon with the dialectics of Soviet economic and social progress itself, of the very Soviet economic policy for which Stalin was so largely and creditably responsible." Its very success, "has aroused among the Soviet masses and the C.P.S.U. membership a greater desire for high standards—political, cultural and spiritual as well as material."

Lovestone claimed that he had always tried to be objective about the Stalin regime. As a result, "I have often been called Stalin's attorney by Trotskyites and by disillusioned, despairing Communist Party members." He added that "It is within the same objectively critical attitude that I sought to evaluate Stalin's latest moves. Exactly for this reason do I condemn the way he has handled the latest manifestations of discontent in the Soviet Union." He concluded that "In short, the crisis in the C.P.S.U., serious as it is, is not a crisis of decay or decline of the Soviet system as such; far more is it a crisis growing out of the tragic and costly inability of the party leadership to meet the new situation in which the wants, standards and demands . . . of the Soviet masses have risen to new heights."

By April 1938, after Bukharin himself had been the most important defendant in the third show trial, Lovestone's criticism of Stalin was much more severe, but he was still not willing to concede that "the whole tragedy is the inevitable inherent logic of the principles of Bolshevism, of the theories of Lenin." He added that "We reject without the slightest reservation all these 'explanations.' " However, he was by then unremitting in his condemnation of Stalin and his associates. He argued that "Here is a bureaucratic clique which is trying to perpetuate itself by sheer brute force, barbaric terror, blackest frameup and wanton blood spilling. The Soviet masses who have lived thru

the famine, fought thru the civil war or made great sacrifices insuring heavy industrialization and rural collectivization, now feel that the time has arrived for the expansion of their democratic rights." He concluded, therefore, that "The working-class movement outside the Soviet Union must leave nothing undone to hasten the dawn of a better day in the U.S.S.R.—to bring to an end a savage regime unworthy of a free working class and of a socialist state."³⁷

Another article in *Workers Age* at about the same time indicated the degree to which the Lovestoneites had moved away from any kind of association with Stalinism. This, a "discussion" article, signed "M.Y.," argued that "Communists of all political shades, including our group, consciously or not, have for too long lost their sense of reality and become attached to the Russian experiences and practices. Despite the fact that our organization made heroic efforts to be realistic and objective and, in the last few years, even boasted of actually functioning as an independent force, free from outside influence, we have to admit now that we have failed miserably." He went on, "After existing outside the filthy atmosphere of the Comintern for nine long years, we are now first turning away with disgust and contempt from the platitude of the 'correctness of the Stalinist general line,' " and added that "the redeeming feature in the inquisition trials is that . . . Stalinism stands exposed as the most dangerous and reactionary force in the labor movement. And it was such for a long time, only we were tardy in realizing it."³⁸

Although Lovestone and "M.Y." were not yet willing to break with their basic Leninist position, no matter how much they saw Stalinism as a degeneration of it, such thoughts were no longer proscribed in the Lovestoneite group. A "discussion" article by Cliff Bennett in the May 28, 1938 issue of *Workers Age* listed six "errors, in part due to specific Russian conditions, which have forged on iron chain of bureaucracy, link by link, about the neck of the Russian proletariat." These "errors" were:

1. In the popular mind, the confusion of the revolution with the Communist Party, aided and abetted by the party leaders. . . .

2. Creation of a political police (G.P.U.) responsible to the party, inevitably intended for the extermination of all workers opposition to the party line. In his agitational speeches and writings Lenin consistently opposed the formation of such a police force.

3. Tendency toward extreme centralization, culminating in personal dictatorship. Unfortunately, Lenin himself stands accused. . . .

4. Decisions of the 10th party congress, C.P.S.U., stressing the importance of concentrating power in the hands of the party instead of consolidating and extending the power of the trade-union organizations and cooperatives.

5. Complete negation of the Marxist ideal of economic equality resulting in an entrenched and well-paid bureaucracy supported by the "bribed" workers (Stakhanovites). . . .

6. It is unnecessary to go into detail on the disgusting steps taken by the Stalin regime since its inception.³⁹

The Stalin-Nazi Pact was the final blow necessary to bring the Lovestoneites to repudiate completely the Communist International. A resolution adopted by the ILLA convention on Labor Day weekend, 1939, contained a passage saying that "the Communist (Third) International . . . pronounced its own death sentence on the eve of this second world war by helping to prepare it, when its totalitarian one-man leader, Joseph Stalin, entered into a pact with Adolf Hitler, father of the 'Anti-Comintern Axis.' Indeed, the Stalin-Hitler pact served as the go-ahead signal for Germany's invasion of Poland and the opening of general war."⁴⁰

By mid-1940 the Lovestoneites had come to revise almost completely their view of the Bolshevik Revolution. They published in *Workers Age*, with an introduction by Bertram Wolfe, Rosa Luxemburg's pamphlet *The Russian Revolution*, a severe early criticism of the Bolshevik regime. In Wolfe's introduction, he noted that "her warning sounds like the words of a gifted prophecy," and follows this comment with the following quotation from Luxemburg's work:

With the repression of political life in the land as a whole, life in the soviets must also become more and more crippled. Without general elections, without unrestricted freedom of press and assembly, without a free struggle of opinions, life dies out in every public institution, becomes a mere semblance of life, in which only the bureaucracy remains as the active elements. Public life gradually falls asleep, a few dozen party leaders of inexhaustible energy and boundless experience direct and rule. Among them, in reality, only a dozen outstanding heads do the leading and an elite of the working class is invited from time to time to meetings where they are to applaud the speeches of the leaders and to approve proposed resolutions unanimously—at bottom then, a clique affair—a dictatorship, to be sure, not of the proletariat however, but only of a handful of politicians. . . . Such conditions must inevitably cause a brutalization of public life; attempted assassinations, shooting of hostages, etc.⁴¹

Further evidence of Lovestoneite revisionism about the Bolshevik Revolution was a series of articles by B. Herman entitled "Why It Happened in Russia." Herman argued that before the Revolution "Lenin's conception of the transition period to socialism was based on the views of Marx and Engels," and that he advocated "neither the limitation of the franchise, nor the one-party dictatorship nor the monolithic party nor even soviets as such." However, subsequently, "While Lenin was willing to concede the limitation of the suffrage as a specific Russian development, he was only too ready to generalize upon soviets as a universal state form for the transition to socialism and to transfer mechanically the one-party system and the monolithic party structure to other countries." Herman comments that "These theoretical innovations appear as improvisations after and justifying the fact, rather than the application of previous Marxist theory."

Herman argued that if the Bolsheviks had won a majority in the Constituent Assembly (elected three weeks after their seizure of power), instead of just 25

percent of the seats, "it is not impossible that the Bolsheviks would have been as enthusiastic for the democratic assembly as the state form of proletarian rule for all countries, as they were for the soviets." He then noted that "The Leninist innovation of a one-party system of proletarian dictatorship followed after the break with the Left Social Revolutionaries in 1918." He added, "Similarly, the outlawing of groups in the Communist Party, and the theory of a party as monolithic as a tombstone, did not arise until the tenth congress of the Russian Communist Party in March 1921." Herman then concluded that by the tenth congress "The essentials of totalitarian rule were . . . well on the way to completion." He added that "Instead of Lenin pointing out that this was not what he had looked for, or desired in July 1917, but unfortunately its very opposite, he incorporated these ideas into his entire system of propaganda as that which all workers should strive for and desire."⁴²

Lovestoneites and POUM in the Spanish Civil War

Undoubtedly another major factor in bringing the Lovestoneites to question the fundamentals of their doctrine was what happened in Republican Spain during the Civil War. The Spanish and Russian Communists sought to use the war to gain absolute power in the Republic for Stalinism. They sought to destroy all competing groups, starting with the Partido Obrero de Unificación Marxista (POUM), and continuing with the anarchosyndicalists and all elements in the Socialist Party which would not submit to their control. In their drive against the other revolutionary and labor elements, the Stalinists sought to destroy the new institutions which had been created in the Republican area immediately following the outbreak of the Civil War. In the name of the slogan "Win the War First," they attempted to end workers' control of industry and to disband the agrarian collectives and the revolutionary local authorities established—largely by anarchosyndicalists and left-wing Socialists, but with the cooperation of the POUM—throughout much of Republican Spain.

These machinations had a direct impact on the Lovestoneites' thinking, because the Partido Obrero de Unificación Marxista was their counterpart in Spain, and the first fury of the Stalinists was directed against it. The POUM was ultimately outlawed, its leaders were arrested, and some of them were killed.

During the first months of the Civil War, *Workers Age* carried many articles on the revolutionary changes which had taken place on the Republican side. They naturally paid special attention to the role of the POUM, of considerable significance in the Catalan and Valencian regions. Then, as Stalinist pressure was brought to bear against the POUM, the Lovestoneites came to the defense of that party. When the Catalan Communists in the Partido Socialista Unificado de Catalonia (PSUC) succeeded in forcing the

POUM out of the Catalan regional government, *Workers Age* carried a substantial article on this, quoting extensively from *La Batalla*, the POUM daily.⁴³

During the early months of 1937, *Workers Age* responded extensively to attacks being made on the POUM in the Communist press all over the world. Then, after the "May events," that is, the spontaneous uprising of anarchosindicalist and POUM elements against Stalinist attempts to take over union-run industries, particularly the telephone company, the Lovestoneites carried various articles giving the POUMist version of what had happened. With the arrest of POUM leaders in June 1937, the Lovestoneites mounted a major campaign on their behalf, both in their paper, and at public meetings. They gave extensive publicity to the case of Andres Nin, leader of the POUM, who was murdered by his Communist captors. They continued to insist that the surviving POUM leaders get a fair trial.

In October 1937 Bertram Wolfe published an article in which he discussed at length the role of the Spanish Communist Party. He commented that "The Communist Party, which had so often and so lightly bandied about the words 'renegade' and 'traitor' and 'counter-revolutionist' voluntarily and aggressively assumed the renegade, the traitorous, the counter-revolutionary role." He added that, "The Communist Party is far from gentle in using claws and fangs to tear to pieces the P.O.U.M., to spring at Largo Caballero when they find he will not play their game, to jail thousands of members of the C.N.T. and U.G.T., and to drive both mighty organizations out of the government for the greater glory of the 'democratic republic.'" Wolfe concluded that the Communist Party had "travelled a long way on the road to degeneration, and it had reached the end of the road. It is today the chief opponent of socialism, of worker and peasant government, of proletarian revolution, in Republican Spain."⁴⁴

Although the Lovestoneites did not make a direct connection between the Spanish Communists' drive for power and the Stalin regime in the USSR, *Workers Age* did publish articles by foreign friends which made this point. In July 1937 a piece by Fenner Brockway of the British Independent Labor Party noted that "It should be clearly understood by the whole working class movement that the suppression of the P.O.U.M. is the work of the communist-controlled police force, and that the Communist Party is almost exclusively responsible. It has concentrated on capturing control of the police and is applying in Spain the methods of the O.G.P.U. in Russia. When foreign socialists are arrested, a Communist Party member of the same nationality is present at the examination and, if the arrested person is a known opponent of communist policy, all the chances are that he will go to prison."⁴⁵

The Lovestoneites, like most non-Stalinist radicals all over the world, had greeted with great hopes and exhilaration the revolution which had taken place on the Republican side during the first days of the Civil War. The almost completely successful effort of the Spanish Communists (with the very exten-

sive Soviet help which became known in later years) to crush that revolution and their attempt to destroy all working-class and Left groups which they could not control, contributed substantially to convince the Lovestoneites that they were not in fact any longer members of the same element in world politics as Stalin, the CPSU, the Spanish Communists, and the Comintern.

Other Possible Factors in Changing Lovestoneite Ideology

There were other factors which contributed to the change in Lovestoneite ideology. One was the Lovestoneites' disillusioning experience with the Comintern after it had abandoned the Third Period line. Not only did the Stalinists not admit that they had ever been wrong, but they swiftly moved to a position as extreme in collaboration with non-Communist elements as the Third Period had been extreme in sectarianism and isolation. Furthermore, the Stalinists showed no inclination to make peace with and reintegrate into their midst the Communist Opposition elements—either in the United States or anywhere else—which had constantly pointed out how erroneous the Third Period line had been. By 1937 or 1938 it had to be clear to the Lovestoneites that no matter how much the Stalinists might adopt positions similar to their own, there existed virtually no possibility of a political reconciliation between the two groups.

In addition, Lovestoneite domestic experiences in the United States, particularly in trade union politics, reinforced this realization. These experiences, recounted in an earlier chapter, had to make it clear to the Lovestoneites that they continued to be regarded as mortal enemies by the followers of Stalin. Similarly, the Lovestoneites and Stalinists held drastically divergent positions with regard to United States foreign relations. The Stalinists applauded Roosevelt's moves towards supporting a general alignment against Nazi Germany, and the Lovestoneites put major emphasis on keeping the United States out of involvement in a new war. This, too, must have made any reconciliation with the Stalinists seem not only unachievable but undesirable.

Rethinking Fundamentals

During their last years the Lovestoneites frankly stated their disillusionment in doctrines which they had held for two decades and searched for a new ideology. There are few examples in the history of radical organizations in which such disillusionment and such a search for an alternative political philosophy has been so clearly admitted. The openness with which the Lovestoneites conceded, in effect, that "We have been wrong," and asked so clearly "Where do we go from here?" is one of the most interesting and unique aspects of their history.

The search for a new ideology began as early as the last months of 1937. On October 9, 1937, *Workers Age* carried an unsigned article about the new semester at the New Workers School. This began by stating that "The revolutionary movement has reached a stage where it must engage in some earnest 'soul searching,' an examination of all its fundamental assumptions, if it is to evaluate the present and survive into the future as a living scientific movement." The article went on to announce that "The Independent Communist Labor League, unpossessed by any fixed dogmas that are impervious to the pressures of fact, owing allegiance to no factional creed such as paralyze Stalinism and Trotskyism, has been engaged in such an examination of its fundamental assumptions in the light of the experience of the last twenty years." To this end, a new discussion course led by Bertram Wolfe was to meet at the New Workers School "to concern itself fearlessly with these problems," and ask "ground breaking Questions":

"In the light of what has happened in the Soviet Union, must the concept of the proletarian dictatorship be modified or discarded? Does proletarian dictatorship necessarily degenerate into bureaucratic and personal dictatorship? Will proletarian dictatorship be necessary in the United States? If so, how will it differ from that in Russia? What safeguards if any can be devised against degeneration? Is peaceful transition to socialism possible? Is violent revolution inevitable? Has the New Deal demonstrated the possibility of planning or spreading prosperity under capitalism? Is international revolutionary organization possible? What light does the degeneration of the Second and Third Internationals throw upon the question? Should a new international be formed or not? What are the desirable limits of centralization and decentralization in an international?"⁴⁶

The ILLA's convention in July 1938 dealt particularly with ideological reorientation. A front page article in *Workers Age* welcoming the delegates proclaimed that "A new departure is imperatively on the order of the day. For it is a fact no longer to be ignored or denied that the three great political tendencies in the international labor movement—social democracy, official communism and anarchism—have failed and failed miserably, even in terms of their own political protestations." The article then suggested that "what we must build is an organization thoroly Marxist in its international vision, in its revolutionary spirit, in its critical realism and constructive approach to the labor movement and its problems, in the flexibility of its methods and tactics."⁴⁷

By the last year of its existence the Lovestoneite group had clearly abandoned its Communist heritage. This was clear from an answer by *Workers Age* to a letter protesting an article by Scott Nearing which had recently appeared in the paper: "We do not agree with the remarks of Scott Nearing under criticism and we do not stand for 'compulsive, coercive cooperation' in any form or under any pretext. We stand for 'individual voluntary cooperation and liberty;' we stand for democratic socialism in the full meaning of the term."⁴⁸

End of the Lovestoneites as a Group

Once the Lovestoneites had abandoned their Communist ideology and had proclaimed themselves democratic socialists, the question of whether there was any further need for their continued existence as a group obviously arose. There already were two democratic socialist organizations, the Socialist Party and the Social Democratic Federation. These two, although in agreement on fundamental ideas and philosophy, were divided on the two major issues which also were increasingly splitting the Lovestoneites themselves: the attitude towards World War II, and the position vis-à-vis the Roosevelt regime.

At the end of December 1940 the Lovestoneites made the deliberate decision, virtually unique among radical groups, to dissolve their organization. The last convention of the Independent Labor League of America, which met in New York City between December 28 and 29, 1940, adopted two basic resolutions. One dealt with "the war question," the more important one declared the end of the eleven year plus existence of the Communist Opposition in the United States.

The Resolution on Dissolution

The final issue of *Workers Age*, announcing the dissolution of the ILLA, was headlined, "Towards a Genuine American Democratic Socialism!" The resolution announcing disbanding of the ILLA began by declaring that "there are times when it becomes the supreme duty of an organization or an individual to speak out frankly and say the word of truth despite all the damage it may do to the most cherished illusions. The present moment is such a time."

The resolution then proclaimed that "Present-day American radicalism finds itself in a hopeless blind-alley from which there is no escape along the old lines." The official Communist Party was "nothing more than a foreign agency of the Stalin dictatorship of Russia, is a thoroly alien and hostile element in the American labor movement," while "the various Trotskyist sects, as well as the organizations that have emerged from the old Socialist Party, however wide their differences on all other questions may be, have one fatal defect in common: they simply close their eyes and refuse to recognize that we are living in a new world, a new world with problems that require new solutions and tasks that demand new programs."

The resolution then remarked that "The events of the past eight years, culminating in the year of war that has been equivalent to a whole decade, have transformed the face of history. . . . The neat and tidy picture of steady advance to a clearly defined, destined goal of socialism has been shattered to bits. In its place, we have a world in endless turmoil in perpetual eruption. The neat and tidy formulas of yesterday, and the organizations based upon and embodying them will no longer do."

With regard to their own organization, the Lovestoneites said that "for the

past several years, the Independent Labor League of America has made every effort within its limited resources to strike out a new path for American socialism. Our work has not been wasted," but it had not brought about the unification of the United States Socialist movement which they had sought. As a result, "we, delegates to the national convention of the Independent Labor League of America, having given the most thoro consideration to the entire situation, do decide to dissolve the I.L.L.A. and to release all members and officers from any further obligations to the organization."

However, as they pictured their action, it was to be a beginning rather than an end. They issued a "call for the unity of all progressive trade unionists and forward-looking American socialists, whether they belong to any existing organization or whether they are among the hundreds of thousands of unaffiliated radicals to be found in this country today. A new start is necessary, imperative. Let us take it before it is too late."⁴⁹

Subsequent Careers of the Lovestoneites

Thus ended the Communist Opposition in the United States. However, the dissolution of the Lovestoneites did not terminate the political and trade union activities of those who had been its leaders. Most were relatively young and they continued to participate in labor and radical activities for a generation or more.

Jay Lovestone soon became head of the Free Trade Union Committee of the American Federation of Labor. Organized to help rescue European trade unionists and Socialists from Nazi-occupied Europe, it became virtually the foreign office of the AFL after World War II. With unification of the AFL and CIO in 1955, Lovestone became head of the international department of the united labor group, retiring only in the early 1970s.

From the late 1940s until his retirement, Lovestone played a very important role in the international labor movement and world politics. Through the Free Trade Union Committee he helped to reconstruct democratic, non-Communist labor movements in Western Europe and Japan. He threw the influence of the U.S. labor movement behind the trade unionists of Arab and Black Africa who were working to throw off colonial rule. He also carried on an unrelenting campaign to emphasize that organized labor of the United States, Europe, and other non-Communist areas had nothing in common with so-called unions of the USSR and other Communist-controlled countries or with similar groups in Franco Spain and other fascist nations. After dissolution of the Communist Opposition, Lovestone never became affiliated with any other radical group. Although he sympathized with and for a time supported the Union for Democratic Socialism, a kind of American Fabian Society, established in the 1950s, he did not join the organization.

Several former leaders of the Communist Opposition worked closely with Lovestone in the Free Trade Union Committee and the International Depart-

ment of the AFL-CIO. These included Harry Greenberg (known as Jim Cork in the Communist Opposition), who represented the Free Trade Union Committee in Indonesia for a number of years; and Irving Brown, who played a major role in the Western European labor movement in the 1940s to 1970s, in the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions while the AFL and AFL-CIO belonged to that group, and subsequently as West European representative of the AFL-CIO.

Bertram Wolfe, second ranking person in the Lovestoneite group during most of its existence, followed a quite different course. He became one of the most outstanding scholars dealing with the history of the Bolshevik Revolution, writing several books on the subject, his best-known one being *Three Who Made a Revolution*. During much of the 1950s he was the chief ideological adviser of the International Broadcasting Office of the State Department. Subsequently he became associated with the Hoover Institution, as a Senior Fellow in Slavic Studies with its library, and after 1956 as a Research Fellow with the Hoover Institution itself. He also was a visiting professor at both Columbia University and the University of California.

Charles Zimmerman, principal Lovestoneite in the International Ladies Garment Workers Union, became manager of the Dressmakers Joint Board of the ILGWU and a vice president of the union. He finally retired in the early 1970s, being succeeded by another Lovestoneite, Israel Breslow. Zimmerman, who had not had any radical political affiliation since dissolution of the Lovestoneites, became a co-chairman of the Socialist Party-Democratic Socialist Federation in 1972, with final reunification of the groups which had split the Socialist Party in 1936.

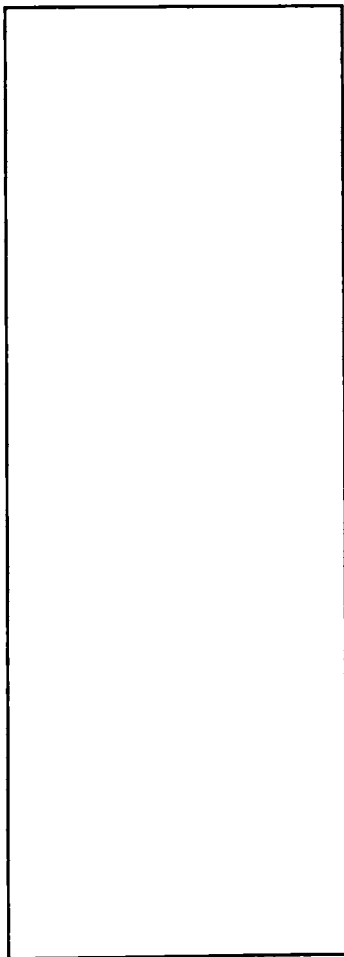
Will Herberg left the radical and labor movement and became a convert to Judaism, the religion in which he had been born, but in which he had never previously believed. He became the leading Jewish theologian of the post-World War II period in the United States, and also served as professor at Drew University, in Madison, New Jersey.

Very few Lovestoneite leaders were active in radical politics after the dissolution of the group. However, there were a few exceptions. Jack Cypin, who had been a leader of the Lovestoneite Youth, joined the Socialist Party and ultimately became a member of its national committee. Ben Davidson, who in the Lovestoneites was known as D. Benjamin, was for a quarter of a century the secretary of the Liberal Party of New York State, formed in 1942 as an offshoot from the American Labor Party (established in 1936 by right-wing Socialists) when the ALP fell under orthodox Communist control.

The German Communist Party (KPD), like many of its national counterparts in the Communist International, was wracked by factionalism throughout most of the 1920s. After 1925 the party was headed by Ernst Thaelmann, described by Jules Humbert-Droz as a "leader made in Moscow,"¹ and as "incapable of having a personal idea or initiative." He was, said Humbert-Droz, "the ideal executor of Russian policy in Germany."² He took over after the Comintern expelled the previous leadership, the so-called Left faction led by Arkady Maslow and Ruth Fischer because of their sympathy for Trotsky.³

By the Sixth Congress of the Comintern in 1928, three tendencies were left within the party. The majority in the central committee, aligned with Stalin, was headed by Ernst Thaelmann and Heinz Neumann. Leadership of the KPD gave Thaelmann extraordinary importance in the International because of the size of the German CP, the economic and political significance of Germany, and the historic importance Germany had always held in the international Marxist movement. Humbert-Droz has suggested that "in the conflict which aligned Stalin against Bukharin . . . Thaelmann was a very important pawn for Stalin."⁴

The Brandler-Thalheimer Group in Germany



In strongest opposition to Thaelmann was the "rightist" group, led by Heinrich Brandler and August Thalheimer. They had controlled the party between 1921 and 1923, and had never been in agreement with Thaelmann's conduct of German party affairs.⁵ Brandler and Thalheimer had been out of Germany for several years but still had a considerable following.

Between the Thaelmann and rightist factions were the "conciliators," led by Arthur Ewert. After the Comintern's Sixth Congress, they sought to have the German party adhere to Bukharin's interpretation of the decisions of that Congress—that is, fighting the "rightist" danger by trying to win over those accused of such heresy rather than by expelling them by administrative fiat. They rejected the Stalinist notion that there was under way a "new revolutionary wave" in Germany and throughout the world and opposed designation of Social Democrats as "social fascists." In doing so, of course, they ran into strong conflict with the Stalinist leadership.⁶

Shortly after the Sixth Comintern Congress, the factional crisis in the German party came to a head. The occasion was what came to be known as the Thaelmann-Wittorf Affaire. Wittorf was secretary of the Hamburg section of the KPD. He had taken over two thousand marks from the local party treasury for his own use, and when accountants from the national party headquarters discovered this, they were threatened with expulsion from the party by Thaelmann if they exposed it. However, one Eberlein, a Comintern functionary charged with supervising the finances of various parties, and moreover an ally of the conciliators, found out from the KPD accountants what had happened. He presented the facts to the central committee of the party. As a result the central committee unanimously voted to depose Thaelmann as secretary general, even Thaelmann himself voting for this move.⁷

However, this was not the end of the matter. Stalin moved to rescue his protégé. It was soon announced that the Presidium of the Comintern, meeting in Moscow, had condemned the German central committee's move and had restored Thaelmann to his post. Jules Humbert-Droz noted that "I understood immediately that Stalin, because of the struggle which he had launched within the Russian Communist Party against the Bukharin-Rykov-Tomsky group, could not agree to lose the principal support which he had within the International, Thaelmann."⁸

The Emergence of the Communist Party of Germany (Opposition)

The Thaelmann-Wittorf Affaire precipitated a general crisis in the leadership of the KPD. On November 10, 1928 the Brandler-Thalheimer group issued a call for a meeting of its followers to launch a fight against the corruption of the leadership of the KPD and the International.⁹ They also began to publish a periodical, *Gegen den Strom*. These actions provoked an open letter from the Presidium of the executive committee of the Comintern

against both Brandler and Thalheimer. In January 1929 both men were formally expelled from the Comintern and from the German and Soviet parties, to which they belonged. As a result, the factional meeting, which took place on December 30, 1928, became in fact the founding congress of a new group, the Communist Party of Germany (Opposition)—KPO—the first such national group to be formally established.¹⁰

The leadership of the KPO included many of the outstanding figures of the first decade of the history of German Communism. Heinrich Brandler had become active in the left wing of the German Social Democratic Party before World War I. He had joined the Spartacus League, led by Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg during the war and as a result was expelled from the Social Democratic Party. In 1916 he was named the Spartacus League delegate to the first Zimmerwald Conference but was not allowed to enter Switzerland. As one of the founders of the Communist Party in December 1918, he was elected to its national committee at its second congress in 1919. In February 1921 he became party chairman as well as a member of both its Politburo and organization bureau. His arrest in March 1921 led to his being elected honorary chairman in absentia of the Third Congress of the Communist International.

Upon release from prison in November 1921, Brandler went to Moscow as German representative in the Executive Committee of the Comintern (ECCI) and in February 1922 he was elected to the ECCI Presidium. In August 1922 he returned to Germany "as uncontested leader of the KPD." For a short while in 1923, he served as one of three Communist ministers in a short-lived Socialist-Communist coalition government in the state of Saxony. However, with the failure of the German CP's abortive putsch in October 1923, Brandler was removed as chairman of the party and in January 1924 went to Moscow "to discuss the failure" and attended the Fifth Congress of the Comintern. Meanwhile, at the Ninth Congress of the German party in April 1924, he was dropped from its national committee, and about a year later, at the Fifth Enlarged Plenum of the ECCI in March 1925, he was severely criticized for "factionalism" and was forbidden to continue to work in the German party.

Brandler became a member of the Soviet Communist Party and worked in the Comintern, the Red International of Labor Unions, and the Red Peasant International. He was again criticized, along with August Thalheimer, at the Seventh Plenum of the ECCI in November and December of 1926; and the German party leadership was told to decide what kind of work he and Thalheimer could do. In March 1927 the Eleventh Congress of the German party assigned them to "non-political work." He returned to Germany in 1928.¹¹

August Thalheimer had also been active in the Social-Democratic Left before World War I. He was drafted into the army at the commencement of World War I, but was wounded and released from service. Between 1914 and 1916 he was editor-in-chief of a socialist newspaper, *Volksfreund*, and from

1916 on helped put out the illegal Spartacus League periodical *Spartakus-briefe*. He joined the Independent Social Democratic Party in 1917 and was a founder of the KPD in 1918. He was elected a member of its national committee, on which he remained through 1923. He was also editor of the KPD central organ, *Rote Fahne*, and a member of the Politburo during this period. While Brandler was the organizational head of the KPD, Thalheimer was its principal theoretician. He led the German delegations to the Third and Fourth Congress of the Comintern. However, Thalheimer was blamed by the Comintern, along with Brandler and Karl Radek, for the failure of the attempted Communist coup in October 1923. He was removed from party leadership, was called to Moscow, and there served in the Comintern and the Marx-Engels Institute between 1924 and 1928. He returned to Germany in May 1928.¹²

Although the Comintern had found it convenient to blame the Brandler-Thalheimer group for failure of the attempted KPD coup in October 1923, the uprising had in fact been ordered by the Comintern itself against the better judgment of the German party leadership, and Brandler had finally cancelled the putsch after becoming convinced that the party would be unable to succeed in it. Richard Lowenthal, a one-time leader of the KPO youth group, has observed that their experience in the 1921-23 period was instrumental in determining subsequent attitudes and positions of the Brandler-Thalheimer group. He has commented:

The old story is relevant because ever since 1923, Brandler and his friends formed a closely-knit critical group on the 'Right' of the party, first in opposition to Ruth Fischer, then after her fall in 1926, in loyal cooperation with the new leadership but without ever again belonging to it. The dual characteristics of this circle of persons—a few dozen senior activists with their followers—were experience and good sense, particularly on trade union work . . . on one side, and a certain doctrinaire narrowness and exclusiveness on the other. When the new 'Left Turn' of the Comintern came at the 6th World Congress in 1928, a minority of the party leadership around Ernst Meyer and Gerhard Eisler and part of the membership were at first opposed to it but only the Brandlerites were willing to break party discipline rather than to follow instructions for trade union splitting.¹³

Although most of the Communist Opposition had been long-time members of the Brandler-Thalheimer faction, some of them had not. One such person was Jakob Walcher, who had been to the Right of the Brandler-Thalheimer leadership in the 1921-23 period. He also had begun as a Social Democratic left winger before World War I, and joined the Spartacus League during the war. He was elected cochairman of the founding congress of the KPD but wasn't elected to its national committee until 1921, although he was a member of the German delegation to the Second Congress of the Comintern. Walcher was not associated in those years with the Brandler-Thalheimer group, and after failure of the 1923 Communist putsch, he was called to Moscow to

represent the right wing of the KPD before the Presidium of the ECCI. In February 1926 he was in the German delegation to the Comintern's Second Conference on Organization, but his continuing Rightist tendencies made the Thaelmann leadership unwilling to allow him to have any leading role in the party. In 1929 he was expelled.¹⁴

Paul Froelich also did not come out of the Brandler-Thalheimer group. He had not been active in the Social Democratic Left before World War I, but from 1916 to 1918 he and Johann Knief had edited a paper *Arbeiterpolitik*, organ of a Social Democratic group known as "the Bremen Left." He represented that group at the international conference in Kienthal, Switzerland in 1916. In 1918 Froelich established the paper *Rote Fahne* in Hamburg. At the first congress of the KPD he was elected to its national committee. He attended the Third Congress of the Comintern and between 1921 and 1924 was a Communist member of the Reichstag, being elected again in 1928. During these years Froelich was a member of the conciliators' faction within the leadership. It was because of that that he was expelled in December 1928, whereupon he joined the KPO.

Paul Froelich's wife, Rosi Wolfstein, was also an important Communist leader. Before World War I she had been a good friend of Rosa Luxemburg and joined both the Spartacus League and Independent Social Democratic Party during the war. She had been a delegate to the founding congress of the Communist Party. At the fourth and fifth congresses of the party, both held in 1920, she was chosen an alternate member of the central committee and in August 1921 was elected a full member. She was part of the German delegation to the Second Congress of the Comintern and was for several years a Communist member of the German parliament. She was expelled from the Communist Party at the same time as her husband in 1928.¹⁵

Clara Zetkin and the KPO

One major figure in the German Party who sympathized with the Brandler-Thalheimer group but who did not follow it out of the party was Clara Zetkin, then the "grand old lady" of the KPD. As a member of the ECCI, she voted against expulsion of Brandler and Thalheimer, "and in other ways solidarized herself with the German Communist Opposition, writing for its press and so on." In the winter of 1930, when Jay Lovestone was in Europe, he had a long talk with Clara Zetkin, and he reported that "she made no secret of her views, although because of weakness and old age, she could not participate in this struggle." Lovestone added: "Even the Stalin-Thaelmann bureaucracy could not find the hardihood to expel Clara Zetkin from the C.P.G., although it came perilously close to it at times."¹⁶

Ben Gitlow confirmed Lovestone's statement. In his autobiography he noted that he went to see Clara Zetkin in a hospital in Moscow in 1929 and

that "she castigated Stalin, called his actions 'Dumheiten' (stupidities). She was indignant over the treatment Bukharin had received. She was in thorough disagreement with Stalin's actions towards the German Communist Party."¹⁷ Later, when Stalin demanded a statement from Zetkin, she wrote:

I must declare that I cannot recognize every single decision of the Executive Committee of the Communist International and of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Germany as the last word of wisdom. On the contrary, I am of the opinion that what has been decided and done by the Executive Committee of the Communist International and the German Communist Party will operate against the achievement of our aim—the mobilization of the masses under the leadership of the Communist Party for the struggle against the bourgeoisie and for the development of the world revolution.¹⁸

Gitlow noted that although her "statement took Stalin by surprise . . . Clara Zetkin was not molested. After all, an old lady confined most of her time to her bed could do very little harm and he was afraid, if he proceeded against her, of the public resentment that would take place throughout the world and in Germany, where she was held in the highest esteem."¹⁹

The First Years of the KPO

During 1929 followers of Brandler and Thalheimer were expelled from the KPD, as were a number of conciliators, in all perhaps one thousand people.²⁰ Among the recruits to the KPO were several leaders of the KPD's national student organization. Lowenthal notes, however, that the KPO had little success in recruiting people who had not belonged to the KPD.

The KPO held its second conference in November 1929. It adopted what was to be the "orthodox" position of the entire International Communist Opposition. M. N. Roy, writing in *Revolutionary Age* noted that the conference "emphatically rejected even the slightest tendency in the direction of organization of a new party. It declared unequivocally that between Social Democracy and Communism there is no half-way house. The Conference decided that the objective . . . must be to save the Party and the International from the dangerous ultra-left line of the ECCI and of the CC of the CPG." Moreover, the conference adopted "a draft platform . . . based upon the fundamentals of the Comintern program," which was presented by August Thalheimer. The conference presented "a picture that has long disappeared from the Communist International. It was a picture of a free discussion of the problems facing the movement. It was a picture of collective work. It was a picture of how a Communist Party should be."

Various reports were given at this conference. Hansen introduced one on the political situation, and Kohlbranch one on municipal policy. There were eighty delegates, as well as eighty fraternal delegates, including representa-

tives from the Austrian, Czech, and Alsatian Communist Oppositions. The first session was held in the hall of the legislature of the province of Thuringia, in which state seven of the eight Communist deputies had joined the KPO. The second session was held in the People's House, the party's headquarters in the state capital.

Roy claimed that by the time of its second conference the KPO had six thousand dues-paying members and a large number of sympathizers still in the KPD. The opposition was issuing eight weekly and bi-monthly publications, with a circulation of twenty-five thousand and was about to launch a daily.²¹ The KPO introduced its daily, *Arbeiterpolitik*, on January 1, 1930,²² but was not able to maintain it as a daily for very long. By August 1932, when *Arbeiterpolitik* was suspended for three months by the German government, it was a weekly.²³

The KPO carried on a wide range of activities. During 1929 it waged an extensive campaign against the Young Plan, an arrangement agreed to by the German government for handling Germany's reparations to the Allies of World War I. *Revolutionary Age* reported in December 1929 that "As far back as February, the CPG Opposition took up the struggle. The abolition of the Versailles Treaty and its effects, it declared, can take place only thru the struggle for the realization of the right of self-determination of peoples and thru the annulment of all war debts. This signifies the struggle of the international working class for the overthrow of the rule of capital."²⁴

The Opposition engaged in electoral activity. In some cases they supported official Communist Party candidates, but in others they ran slates of their own. Their first major experiment in independent electoral action was in the December 7, 1929 provincial election in the state of Thuringia, one of the KPO's principal centers of influence. They received a major setback,²⁵ receiving only twelve thousand votes "primarily in the most proletarian sections of Thuringia," according to *Revolutionary Age*. The official Communist vote fell from one hundred and thirteen thousand in the previous election to eighty-five thousand and, while the Social Democrats received two-hundred and fifty-seven thousand votes and the Nazi vote grew from thirty thousand in May 1928 to eighty thousand in December 1929.²⁶

In March 1932 the KPO backed Ernst Thaelmann, the official Communist Party candidate for president, as did the pro-Trotskyist Leninbund and the Socialist Workers Party (SAP). However, the KPO was critical of the "personalist" nature of the KPD's campaign and were also very critical of the Social Democrats for backing reelection of President von Hindenburg.²⁷

At the end of 1932 the KPO again ran its own candidates in municipal elections in Thuringia. Although they only had a few nominees, an official KPO statement claimed that the group had "registered a big increase, absolutely and relatively, frequently doubling its vote and sometimes increasing it on an even greater scale." They won twenty-one seats in municipal councils, compared to thirty-eight won by the official Communists in the same municipi-

palities. They also ran ahead of the new Socialist Workers Party, a left-wing Social Democratic group.²⁸

The KPO carried on activity in the trade unions, if on a limited scale. They had some influence in the German Metal Workers Union (DMV), at the time the largest trade union in the world outside the Soviet Union. At the DMV congress in September 1932, 272 of the 283 delegates were Social Democrats, the SAP had four, the official Communists two, and the KPO five. *Workers Age* claimed that "The CPG-O [Communist Party of Germany (Opposition)] delegates led the fight against the reformist bureaucracy all along the line," and that "The DMV Congress has produced a sharp reaction among the Communist Party membership who are tending more and more to look upon the Communist Opposition as the bearer of Communist struggle in the trade union movement."²⁹ Shortly before the Nazis came to power the KPO ran a joint list of candidates with the official Communists in the Stuttgart branch of the DMV. Two KPO members were elected and one official Communist.³⁰

The Oppositionists held regular conferences and other membership meetings. Early in 1930 the KPO Youth held its second conference, at which time it claimed one thousand members, compared to twenty-two thousand in the official Communist youth group. The Opposition Youth paper, *Junge Kampfer*, was reportedly selling about three thousand copies an issue.³¹ The Fourth Conference of the KPO met in January 1932 in the Prussian Landtag building in Berlin. The main report was given by Heinrich Brandler, and the major debates were over relations with the KPD and the SAP.³² In June 1932 the Opposition Youth held "a very successful National Functionaries Conference" in Berlin.³³

The last legal conference of the KPO was held between December 31, 1932, and January 1, 1933. It was reported to have been "a striking reflection of the real strength of our group." Brandler spoke on activity of the national leadership; Thalheimer on the political situation; and Boize on the work in the unions. A special feature was "an informative report on the Soviet Union, including the splendid achievement of socialist construction as well as the great difficulties in its way." *Workers Age* concluded that the meeting "augured well for the future of our group."³⁴

The KPO Fight for the United Front

The major political argument of the Communist Opposition before the advent of Hitler to power was the need for a united front to confront the Nazi danger. They were specially critical of the official Communists' position, citing particularly a statement in the official party's paper, *Rote Fahne* on October 16, 1931, which declared that "When once the Nazis get into power, then will the united front of the proletariat rise and brush them aside. They will be done away with more rapidly than any other government."³⁵

A typical statement of the position of the KPO was an open letter sent to the central committee of the official party in connection with the presidential election of March 1932. It urged a united front of the Communists, Social Democrats, SAP, and Social Democratic-controlled union federation, and stated in part:

A concentration of masses against Fascism is impossible if the Communist Party rejects the building up of united front bodies with other proletarian organizations and the creation of really non-party anti-Fascist class defense organizations. . . . This ultra-left course has helped the growth of Fascism and has aided the reformists to retain their influence over the decisive sections of the working class in spite of their unparalleled betrayal.

In the interests of the Communist movement and of the organization of a serious anti-Fascist, extra-parliamentary struggle, we therefore officially appeal to you even now to approach the above-named organizations on the basis of an anti-Fascist program of action. We make this proposal to you because the organizational strength of the C.P.G. will give it extra-ordinary weight and effectiveness among the reformist workers and will greatly strengthen the revolutionary front.³⁶

On June 1, 1932, just after ouster by President von Hindenburg of the centrist government of Heinrich Brüning, the KPO again called on the Communist Party, Social Democrats, SAP, and trade unions for establishment of a united front. The KPO received no official replies, but the Berlin-Brandenburg regional conference of the official party issued a call, in almost the same words that the KPO had used, to the district committee of the Social Democrats, who refused these overtures, demanding that the official Communist Party first stop its attacks on them. Thereafter, "the Communist Opposition, in a declaration issued on June 18, heartily greeted the forward step of the C.P. leadership, although pointing out certain inadequacies in the slogans and also the necessity of addressing the central authorities of the S.D.P. . . . The Opposition declaration also appealed most vigorously to the Central Committee of the C.P.G. to take some positive steps in reestablishing Communist unity as a great move forward in forging a united front of labor. To this, no answer."³⁷

A *Workers Age* article in August 1932, datelined Berlin, again reflected the KPO position. The KPO "attacked both the Social Democrats' and the official Communists' position on the United Front. It charged that the Social Democrats wished to preserve the capitalist state more than they wished a United Front." The writer even professed to see signs of a possible willingness of the Social Democrats to deal with the Nazis in order to preserve the capitalist state. On the other hand, the official Communists were still labelling the Social Democrats "social fascists" and were tarring the KPO and the SAP with the same brush. Thus, they had "relapsed into old ultra-left nonsense."³⁸

First Split in the KPO

The KPO underwent an important split early in 1932. The issue was whether the KPO should continue as an "Opposition" to the official Communist Party, or should attempt to form an entirely new group, independent both of the official Communists and the Social Democrats. However, Richard Lowenthal has suggested some other motivations, psychological and political, for this split. He has written that "my friends and myself, who had formed the national leadership of the Communist Student organization, soon came to feel rather isolated in this closely-knit group of traditionalists who believed that all the problems of revolutionary strategy had been 'correctly' answered by the first four world congresses of the Comintern and had only to be 'applied directly' to any new situation." Lowenthal added, "Moreover, while our little circle was rather critical also of Soviet internal developments and sympathized with Bukharin . . . Brandler's group at that time carefully avoided any attacks on the Soviet leadership, appealing from an ill-informed Stalin to a better-to-be informed Stalin only."³⁹

The struggle between the majority centered on Brandler and Thalheimer and the minority, led principally by people who had not been members of the old Brandler-Thalheimer group in the KPD, came to a head at the fourth conference of the group in January 1932. There it was disclosed that leaders of the minority had had conferences with the new Socialist Workers Party and had discussed the possibility of the merger of the KPO and SAP. This idea was rejected by a majority of the delegates, who favored maintenance of the Opposition stance of the KPO, as August Thalheimer urged. Once the fourth conference was over, leaders of the minority announced that they would not accept the decisions. The national leadership of the KPO then declared that by this action, the minority had put themselves outside the organization. Those thus expelled were Walcher, Froelich, Enderle, Frank, Thomas, J. Lang, Koehler, and Baier.⁴⁰

The principal centers of strength of the minority were Offenbach, Bremen, Dresden, and Hamburg. The KPO group in the Freital section of Dresden was "reorganized" by those loyal to the KPO. In Bremen the same thing happened, with Heinrich Brandler himself being present, and seventy-five members remaining loyal to the KPO. In the Wasserdants section of Hamburg, the district committee was expelled, and an emergency conference was held to reorganize the party. In Offenbach, a group of forty-five members, reportedly a minority, remained loyal.⁴¹

Early in April 1932 *Workers Age* reported that Walcher and Froelich had joined the Socialist Workers Party, referred to as a "centrist swamp." The article noted that Leon Trotsky had welcomed their joining the SAP as "a step forward." *Workers Age*, on the other hand, said that the entry of these men into the SAP reflected their loss of faith in the possibility of "again winning the

CPG and the Communist International to a Leninist tactical course."⁴² *Workers Age* was obviously correct in this assessment.

Most minority KPO members joined the SAP. Boris Goldenberg has written of the Socialist Workers Party, which had been established as a result of a split in the Social Democratic Party, that "These people were pacifists and 'left' social democrats, whereas the KPO-Minority (to which I belonged) considered themselves to be Communists who entered the SAP in order to conquer this party for communism (which they succeeded in doing). Interesting to note is that Willy Brandt was the 'youth leader' of the SAP."⁴³

Richard Lowenthal, who was also a member of the KPO-Minority which joined the SAP, has written along the same lines: "When . . . a left-wing opposition split off from the SPD to form the SAP . . . a minority of the leadership of the KPO decided to join and 'conquer' it in order to influence the left-wing Socialist 'masse:.' This effort of the KPO minority, led by Jakob Walcher and Paul Froelich, was successful so far as the 'conquering' of the new party was concerned—but this new party, while about ten times larger than the KPO, did not succeed in reaching the 'masses' or influencing events either."⁴⁴

First Impact of Nazi Advent to Power on KPO

Like all left-wing and labor groups, the Communist Opposition was ultimately destroyed by the Nazi regime, which came to power on January 30, 1933. However, although the KPO was only a tiny organization compared to the Communist and Social Democratic parties, it was able to offer more effective resistance for a longer period of time than were the much larger groups. Richard Lowenthal has commented on the reason for this: "After Hitler's seizure of power, both KPO and SAP engaged in valiant underground activity; consisting as they did of well-trained activists closely linked by long tradition, they were less open to spies than the big parties and suffered their serious losses somewhat later, but eventually most of their groups were wiped out."⁴⁵

An early blow by the Nazi regime against the Communist Opposition was suspension of its paper, *Arbeiterpolitik*. The police order said that "In the appeal 'A Common Defense' . . . the National Committee of the C.P.G.-O comes out for extra-parliamentary struggle and approves every act of mass mobilization, 'every action, even the smallest, against Fascism.' As its objective is placed the overthrow of Fascism and the victory of Communism."⁴⁶

The major trade unions were not smashed completely by the Nazis until May 1933, four months after Hitler came to power. In the intervening months the Communist Oppositionists claimed to make considerable headway in organized labor. The National Committee of the KPO claimed that "Wherever we have a group we have won the political leadership of the workers." Union

groups in Jena, Leipzig, Dusseldorf, Wurtemberg, Feuerbach, Stuttgart, and elsewhere expressed support for the KPO's plea for unity of all labor and Marxist groups against the Hitler regime. In some cases local KPO unionists won temporary positions of leadership in the unions. The national committee claimed that the KPO "in spite of its meager resources and limited strength... has shown itself far more politically active and capable of leadership than the big official Communist Party with its boasted millions of votes."⁴⁷

A report from the KPO written about the time of the Hitler regime's complete liquidation of the legal opposition in May/June 1933, but published abroad sometime later, said of the KPO's activities in the months following the Nazi ascension to power:

The reports of our group show that it has almost completely avoided the political and organizational collapse of the Communist Party; it is, moreover, free of spies, who literally infest the C.P.G. These things alone have created tremendous prestige for our group. In addition, our group is working with the greatest intensity; there is no local group that is not active. The difficulties of work under the Hitler dictatorship are inconceivable to anyone who has not experienced them. There is some unclarity among our comrades on the trade union question, but this will soon be corrected. But there is no comparison at all in this respect with the official party. These people are now beginning to understand that the desertion of the Communists from the trade unions was a big mistake and now, in panic, they are urging mass entry into Fascist 'unions.' They still cannot understand the fundamental ideas of Communist trade union policy.

... There is no question today of any mass action in Germany. We are still in the preparatory stage, in the stage of gathering of cadres, in the stage of regrouping.⁴⁸

KPO in the Underground

By the second half of 1933 political work by the KPO or any other anti-Nazi group had perforce to be clandestine. Freedom of press, speech, and assembly had completely disappeared; travel for political purposes was highly dangerous. All anti-Nazi groups and parties were illegal. The work of the KPO and other groups had to be conducted, necessarily, on a highly decentralized basis, by more or less isolated nuclei of faithful members.

A report from the KPO dated December 13, 1933, indicated the difficulties under which the German Communist Oppositionists were operating:

All our comrades are being exposed to brutal persecutions. In the Storm Troops (S.A.) camps, prisons and concentration camps, they are beaten and severely injured. A Berlin comrade of ours was put up against the wall and the bestial S.A. man shot to the left and to the right of him in order to force him to reveal addresses. Two former employees of our paper were immediately arrested after the Reichstag fire, and brutally manhandled. In Zehachwitz there is not a single member of ours who is not in a concentration camp or under arrest. In a certain section of Berlin not a single member of ours has been spared an investigation by the police. . . . The quest of rooms is a very

difficult one to solve. The publications must always be printed in different places and the securing of the publications printed abroad is connected with great financial expenses. . . . However, we are in the daily struggles. Our publications appear regularly. In the main they appear photographed in vest pocket size. The editions are fortnightly, and a number of District newspapers. One copy often passes thru dozens of hands. At the present time we are conducting a campaign against war armaments and the rapid rise in prices under the central slogan of "Workers Control of Production."⁴⁹

Occasionally the underground work of the KPO came to the attention of foreign journalists. The *Manchester Guardian Weekly* of September 8, 1933, noted that "The Communist Party Opposition began to form groups of five over a year ago. They are a very small group but are much less doctrinaire without being less audacious than the Communist Party of Germany." The writer went on to note, "Their losses have been only slight. They have their own agents among the Brown Shirts, while the Brown Shirts have none in the CPO. But they are desperately poor and are able to produce hardly any printed material. Their typewritten or hectographed leaflets are carefully read. Workmen often pay more for them than the fixed price."⁵⁰

In the first year or so of the Nazi regime, the KPO was able to hold delegate conferences on a regional or even national basis. *Workers Age* of November 1, 1933 (page 2) reported that the first district conference of elected delegates had recently met in Wurtemberg. For reasons of safety only eighteen people attended, and twelve participated in the discussion. They dealt with their own organizational problems, but also had time to pass a resolution about the difficulties the International Communist Opposition (ICO) was having with its Swedish affiliate, endorsing the position of the ICO.

In April 1934 a national conference of underground KPO delegates was held in Denmark. It was noted that "the most important districts had sent delegates," and that there were twenty-two people present. *Workers Age* reported a month later that "The organizing of the conference greatly taxed the technical and financial ability of the group as a whole. The problem was smoothly solved, an excellent testimony of the efficiency of the Group." The agenda for this, the first and only such national meeting of the KPO clandestine organization, included five items: "1. Report of the National leadership and reports of the districts. 2. Political situation and tasks. 3. Building of illegal class trade unions and the organization of the struggle in the economic field. 4. International labor movement. 5. Organizational questions and elections." According to *Workers Age* "The discussion centered around the question of the political, organizational and technical preparation of the group for the transition from the present stage of mere propaganda to action." The delegates felt that the time to move into action was approaching, insofar as the conditions among German workers were concerned, but that neither the KPO nor the other underground groups were in a position to capitalize on this fact. "The delegates were in full agreement that this constituted the burning question of the day and that all efforts must be concentrated on solving it."⁵¹

For several years after the Nazis came to power, the Communist Opposition press abroad continued to carry notices of arrests, tortures, and deaths of KPO members in Germany. On August 3, 1935, *Workers Age* reported trials of KPO members in Weimar, Jena, and elsewhere, with the prisoners receiving sentences of from three to twelve years. It also reported the death of one KPO leader in the Oranienberg concentration camp. On October 9, 1935, the same periodical noted the death in the Waldheim prison, of Heinrich Plass and Anna Schumann, leaders of the KPO in Leipzig. It also reported that these people's families were being persecuted. On October 10, 1936, *Workers Age* reported the suicide of KPO member Hermann Hoffmann in an Essen jail, and the drowning of Richard Kreutzberg, a KPO member in Cologne. As late as January 1, 1938, *Workers Age* indicated that at least some KPO groups were still active.

A Personal Witness of the KPO Underground

For several years Evelyn Scheyrer, a Lovestoneite, was in charge of maintaining contacts with the KPO underground. She went to Germany in 1934, 1936, and 1937. After she was tried in absentia by the Nazis in a mass trial, she did not return to the Third Reich. She has noted that the KPO underground apparatus consisted mainly of people who had belonged to the KPO before Hitler came to power and of children of those who had been in the party then. There wasn't any recruiting, because there was no real party into which to recruit people. Recruiting came to mean merely getting some additional person who would listen or who would take some of the KPO's surreptitious literature. The little KPO groups were isolated from one another, and one of Evelyn Scheyrer's main tasks was helping them stay in contact and providing them with news of one another. This was more a matter of keeping up the human spirit than of doing anything really significant in a political sense.

In 1934, according to Evelyn Scheyrer, most top-rank KPO leaders were out of circulation, either in concentration camps or in exile, and the same was true of many second-rank leaders. By 1936 all second-rank people were out of action, and there was no real national party organization left.

KPO underground units would publish a newspaper small enough to fit in the palm of a hand. They would sometimes be able to organize slowdowns in factories and would inform one another of what they were doing. These were their main activities. A major project, for instance, would be to reestablish contact with someone who had been released from a concentration camp without getting picked up by the police themselves. All this was not of much value politically, but it maintained the morale of the participants.

In Jena in 1936 the KPO had a group of rather reckless youngsters among the Zeiss plant workers. When Evelyn Scheyrer was there, they held a meeting of twenty people for her, which was foolhardy in the extreme. They operated

almost openly, meeting in each other's homes. Evelyn Scheyrer sent word to other KPO groups not to send anyone into Jena because she knew that the group there would soon get caught. By 1937 it had disappeared completely.

Being a courier for the underground was a dangerous undertaking. Evelyn Scheyrer professed not to have been afraid for her own welfare, feeling that if she were caught, an international incident would be made of it. However, she had been afraid that she might compromise all those caught with her. Nonetheless, on only one occasion was she almost captured. She had met four young men in a woods near Dusseldorf. She had spent an hour and a half with them, and they had begun to return to town, singing, apparently just five young people on a lark in the woods. Suddenly they heard someone cry "Halt." She was told by the forest warden who stopped them to put out her cigarette. She apologized profusely, and since she was a young and pretty blonde, that was all there was to it. However, if the man had happened to ask her name, they would probably all have been arrested.⁵²

The KPO and the Saar Plebiscite

The last part of Germany in which the KPO was able to function legally was the Saar Valley. The Versailles Treaty after World War II had placed this region under League of Nations control and in economic union with France. The Treaty also provided that after fifteen years a plebiscite be taken among inhabitants to decide the area's future. The plebiscite was held in January 1935. Voters were presented with three alternatives: return to Germany, assimilation with France, or maintenance of the status quo under League suzerainty. The Nazis, understandably, advocated the first alternative, the Social Democrats and official Communists campaigned for maintenance of the status quo, while some other parties advocated annexation to France.

The most peculiar position taken by any of the parties was that of the KPO. In this election they gave the impression of having switched places with the official Communists, and having assumed the positions which the KPD had only recently abandoned and which the Brandler-Thalheimer group had so strongly criticized. They did not back the united front of the Social Democrats and official Communists of the Saar in support of maintaining it outside Nazi control. Rather than backing any of the three choices on the ballot, they raised the unrealistic slogan of "A Soviet Saar" as their solution to the problem. After the Nazis' victory in the plebiscite August Thalheimer explained the reasoning of his group in the following terms:

The results of the plebiscite unfortunately fully confirm that criticism of the Communist Opposition which was directed not against the united front as such but against the basis on which the united front was agreed upon and carried out. We opposed a united front on the basis of the Social Democratic slogan of "Status Quo." We advised that the CP wage an independent struggle for a Soviet Saar. We demanded a united

front not in the plebiscite but for extra-parliamentary activities directed against French as well as German capitalists in the Saar, against the governing committee of the League of Nations and against Nazi terror. United extra-parliamentary activity for the realization of these aims would have been a decisive factor because only mass actions could break Nazi terror.

The CPO maintained discipline during the election struggle but expressly reserved the right to openly criticize the united front after the elections. The correctness of its criticism and tactics is obvious. The Saar, too, has proven that opportunistic deviations in the application of united front tactics are very costly.⁵³

It is hard to square this attitude with the pleas of the KPO for a united front during the pre-Nazi period in Germany. This advocacy of sectarian isolation in pursuit of utopian objectives was more like the position of the official German party before January 1933 than like that of the KPO in those years.

The KPO in Exile

Shortly after the advent of the Nazis to power, Brandler, Thalheimer, and other KPO leaders went into exile. They made their headquarters in Paris and from there sought to maintain contact with their party's underground in Germany. They also maintained relations with Communist Opposition groups in other countries, and remained active in the International Communist Opposition. Indeed, the headquarters of the ICO, which was moved to Paris upon the advent of the Hitler regime, was completely manned by members of the German Communist Opposition,⁵⁴ which caused certain problems with other ICO groups, particularly the Americans.

The KPO in exile published their journal, *Gegen den Strom*. Also, for more than a year August Thalheimer contributed a regular column on international events to the *Workers Age*.

The Brandler-Thalheimerites continued to consider themselves a Communist Opposition group. For at least a while, they still hoped for reunification of their organization with the official Communist Party. In fact, for a short while there was an agreement between the two groups to conduct joint underground activities. This came about as a result of a conference in mid-1934 of KPO and KPD representatives "held under instructions of the Executive Committee of the Communist International (ECCI), and the Bureau of the International Communist Opposition." Out of this meeting came an agreement for both groups to appeal to their members "to cooperate in the preparation of mass actions and to form organs of joint struggle all over the country for this purpose." It was also decided "to begin jointly the building of illegal class trade unions."

However, when the official Communist delegates sought to get the KPO representatives to concede that they had "fought against the Party for years," the KPO delegates refused, stating that "The differences . . . are of a tactical

nature and that we have never been for the creation of a new Communist Party . . . that we are an organized Communist tendency," and that "we broke discipline at one time because there was no normal inner-party democracy and no opportunity was given to discuss these differences." *Workers Age* concluded that "The discussion showed that the question of unity between the party and the CP GO was not yet mature, or immediately realizable."⁵⁵

In 1935 the official German Communists adopted the Popular Front line. They issued a new program as the result of negotiations among exiled representatives of the KPD, Social Democrats, Center Party, State Party, and several religious groups. Thalheimer declared that "The Communist Opposition categorically rejects such a flagrant abandonment of basic Communist tasks in the coming revolution." He added "We maintain . . . that such a coalition is incompatible with the preparation of the proletarian revolution and that the alliance of the working class with petty bourgeois elements cannot be realized thru a coalition with bourgeois parties or groups, but only thru the formation of united front organs against the bourgeois opposition groups—united front organs which . . . must develop into soviets."⁵⁶

Like Communist Oppositionists in other countries, those of Germany remained loyal to the Soviet Union through the mid-1930s. August Thalheimer, in his column in *Workers Age* in March 1935, commenting on a model statute for collective farms adopted at a recent Conference of Collectivized Peasants, said that the statute "makes for an extension of democracy within the artel. A number of very important measures must be determined by the full meeting of all artel members. This is not democracy for its own sake (which by the way does not exist) but democracy on the basis of socialist communal property and on the proletarian dictatorship."⁵⁷

The KPO also supported Soviet foreign policy. Thalheimer remarked that "The international working class must above all concentrate on supporting the peace policies of the Soviet Union and the forces of the proletarian revolution in Germany in order to make the outbreak of a war which would out-terrorize the World War impossible."⁵⁸

The KPO likewise defended the early stages of Stalin's purges. Shortly after the assassination of Kirov and the wave of terror which Stalin mounted in its wake, Thalheimer attacked the denunciation of this terror by exiled German Social Democratic leaders. He commented that "It is not out of place to remind these gentlemen, who are so indignant when the Soviet Union answers white terror with revolutionary terror . . . that they themselves practiced a little terror in 1918-20."⁵⁹

At the end of 1935 Thalheimer also praised the Stakhanovite Movement in the USSR. He commented that "The Stakhanoff movement illustrates concretely that a socialist economy is fundamentally far superior to the capitalist system. Socialist economy is far more productive, and creates more wealth than does capitalism. The new type of socialist worker is certainly superior to the capitalist wage-slave."⁶⁰

However, the German Communist Oppositionists, like their counterparts in other countries, were severely shaken by two events of the late 1930s; the massive purges in the USSR, and the behavior of the Communist Party in the Spanish Civil War. These events raised grave doubts in the minds of many KPO people about their rôle as a "Communist Opposition," and ultimately led to a split.

By November 1937, the twentieth anniversary of the Soviet regime, the KPO had become somewhat more cautious in their praise of the Stalinist regime. After comparing the French and Russian revolutions, Thalheimer wrote that "In the Soviet Union, the socialist revolution is not declining. It is far from being 'liquidated.' But it is in a serious crisis, a crisis of growing pains. Socialist economy has developed and grown up at terrific speed . . . but the 'political superstructure,' the forms and methods of Soviet government, have not grown with it. They remained backward." He concluded, "For the sake of the October Revolution, we do not stand with the official chorus, which, inside and outside the Soviet Union, celebrates the twentieth anniversary with unqualified praise of the Stalinist regime. We celebrate this famous anniversary by fighting for the advance of Soviet democracy on socialist principles. We fight for the next stage of the Soviet state and we prepare for the proletarian revolution thruout the world."⁶¹

The Spanish Civil War also influenced the thinking of many German Communist Oppositionists. A number of them rushed to join the Loyalist forces, specifically the columns sent to the front by the Partido Obrero de Unificación Marxista (POUM). German Communist Oppositionists, like other opponents of the Stalinists, were arrested by the Spanish Communist Party's GPU. In July 1937 the International Communist Opposition, over the signatures of Brandler and Thalheimer, issued a statement on the arrest in Barcelona of six German Oppositionists. They said that "We take upon ourselves any political and personal guarantee for our arrested comrades. They are antifascists and revolutionaries, incapable of any action that could be construed as high treason against the Spanish Revolution."⁶² However, although defending their own arrested comrades, and supporting the POUM, the KPO leaders, particularly Brandler, did not go along with the increasingly strong anti-Stalinism of the POUM. Víctor Alba (Pedro Pagés), then a young journalist on the POUM newspaper, *La Batalla*, has written that "I remember Brandler in Barcelona in 1936, in a private discussion with Nin in the Justice Ministry, shouting, because Brandler opposed having the Buro condemn the Moscow trials and counselled the POUM not to show itself so anti-Stalinist."⁶³ Victor Alba added that "I accompanied Brandler because I spoke French to some local headquarters of the POUM and some other places in Barcelona. Silent, taciturn, he asked no questions."^{64*}

*Recent research by Willy Buschak of the Ruhr University at Bochum indicated that Victor Alba's memory was at fault in one regard in this incident. Dr. Buschak has gathered convincing documentary proof that it was Thalheimer not Brandler who was in Catalonia in November 1936. (Letter of Buschak, 4 April 1981.)

The Second KPO Split

The strong reticence of the principal leaders of the KPO to break completely with Stalinism and the Soviet regime ultimately led to a split in the German Communist Opposition and a separation of its principal leaders from those elements of the International Communist Opposition which had become strongly anti-Stalinist and anti-Soviet. Some light on these schisms is cast by a letter from the Executive Committee of the Independent Labor League of America to the leading committee of the German Communist Opposition, which was published in March 22, and March 29, 1939, issues of *Workers Age*. It began by professing a desire not to intervene in the internal affairs of the KPO, but then objected to the KPO's removing at will those of its members who were serving on the staff of the International Communist Opposition. It also noted disagreements between the Lovestoneites and the KPO leadership about the future of the ICO itself.⁶⁵ It likewise took strong exception to the efforts of the KPO leaders to "infiltrate" the British Independent Labor Party, an ally of the ICO, in order to establish a faction in the British party based on people who had belonged to the ICO.⁶⁶

The Americans offered advice to the KPO leaders with regard to their internal affairs: "Permit us to say a final word on the factional struggle in your ranks . . . we still believe that you are making a big mistake in the organizational methods you are employing. Experience should already have made it plain to what such methods lead. Perhaps, it is necessary to bend the stick backwards in order to straighten it out; certainly, it seems to us a fatal blunder to keep the stick bent the wrong way just because it is the way we inherited it from the Comintern." The letter then noted that "We managed to overcome two grave inner crises without expulsions, suspensions or any other serious organizational measures. Some comrades left us, it is true, but the choice was theirs not ours. And we overcame these crises all the better, we believe, just because we were so sparing in organizational measures, just because we did not rush in with suspensions and removals."

The Lovestoneites ended their letter saying, "We don't mean to preach to you or to set ourselves up as a model for you to follow. But we cannot help feeling the way we do about the matter because we are thoroly [sic], convinced that the methods you are employing cannot lead to any good."⁶⁷

Just what these "methods" did lead to became clear a few months later. The Eighth National Convention of the Lovestoneites, in August 1939 received a letter from the Group of International Marxists of Germany. This noted that "Comrades, we were members of the Communist Party (Opposition) of Germany since its inception. We were expelled a few months ago because we felt obliged to speak up against its policies on the war question, which appeared to us to be leaning in the direction of Stalinism. We expressed our differences with the C.P.G.O.'s entire political activity, which seemed to us sectarian and directed against a new orientation of the revolutionary working class move-

ment. For this expression of opinion, we were expelled. We then organized ourselves as the Group of International Marxists." They added that "We have maintained connections with the underground movement in Germany and are doing our part in clarifying the difficult problems involved in the struggle against the Hitler dictatorship. Our efforts are directed at securing a concentration of all German revolutionary forces and groups into a unified organization."⁶⁸ Unfortunately, no names are signed to the published version of this letter.

Subsequently, the International Marxists signed a declaration of "Independent Socialist Parties associated with the International Workers Front Against War," published in the December 22, 1939, issue of the *New Leader*, organ of the Independent Labor Party of Great Britain. The KPO also signed this statement as did a third German group, *Neue Weg*.⁶⁹

The last published record of the German Communist Oppositionists before the fall of France appeared in *Workers Age* on April 20, 1940. This was a message of "Independent Socialists of Germany," apparently the same Group of International Marxists, addressed to the workers of "enemy" countries.⁷⁰

Later History of KPO Leaders

The fall of France before the Nazi armies in May and June of 1940 forced the German Communist Opposition exiles to flee once again and marked the end of the German Communist Opposition as an organized group. However, a few words are in order concerning the subsequent careers of some of its leaders.

Boris Goldenberg has written about Brandler and Thalheimer: "In 1941 I met Brandler and Thalheimer in Havana. They had been refused their 'danger' visa to the USA and were stranded in Cuba together with a former political enemy of theirs, Maslow." He adds that "In Havana both old leaders had to renounce all political activity, simply because there was nobody there to be 'active' with. Thalheimer used to work in the University Library, where he found by chance, a German edition of the complete works of Hegel." Goldenberg added that Thalheimer died in Cuba, "whereas Brandler after the war went back to (Western) Germany, still hoping that the Stalinists might re-accept him—which they refused to do."⁷¹

Jakob Walcher went to New York after the fall of France. There, according to Goldenberg, "he worked in a communist-led committee for a democratic Germany during the latter part of the war." Subsequently, "He . . . reconciled himself to the official communist line and in 1946 returned to East Germany, where at first he held subordinate party positions. He was expelled from the SED [the East German Communist Party] in 1952; four years later he was readmitted to the party, and was still living in East Germany at the end of the 1960s."⁷² Goldenberg added that in East Germany Walcher "during a time-

... played a certain role in the Trade-Union movement, but was later pushed into the background, becoming a sort of 'un-person.' "73

Paul Froelich, another KPO figure later in the SAP, also obtained admission to the United States after the fall of France. After the war, he and his wife, Rosi Wolfstein, returned to West Germany where they became active in the Social Democratic Party. He died in Frankfurt in 1963. However, his widow was still active in the Social Democratic Party in 1975 at the age of 87.⁷⁴

Several younger leaders of the KPO who went with Walcher and Frolich into the SAP also became active in the Social Democratic Party in West Germany after World War II. Richard Lowenthal succeeded in getting to Great Britain after the fall of France and ultimately became a British subject. However, he returned to Germany after the war, was for many years a professor in the Free University of Berlin, and was actively connected with the Friederich Ebert Foundation of the Social Democratic Party. Boris Goldenberg found refuge in Cuba in 1941 and stayed there until after the Castro regime came to power. He then returned to West Germany, where he became active in the Social Democratic Party.

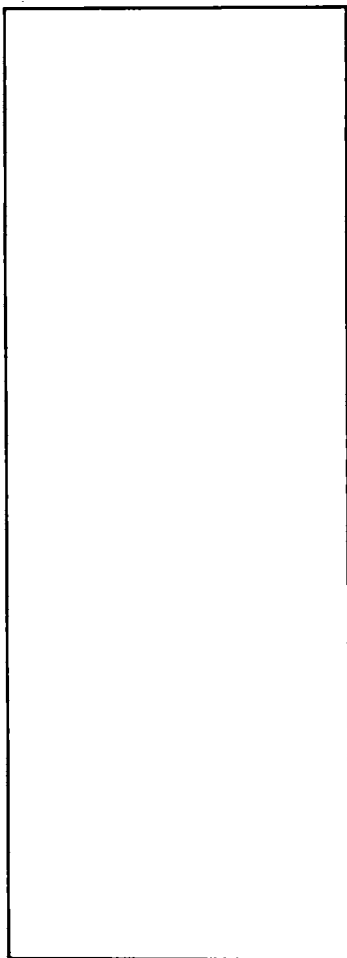
What did not happen to the Swiss Communist Opposition is more interesting and important than what did. The movement as such remained small, was comparatively short-lived, and was largely confined to one region of the country. By itself, it would not justify having an entire chapter devoted to it.

For several decades Jules Humbert-Droz was the most outstanding Swiss Communist, one of the first secretaries of the Communist International, and a figure of prestige throughout the Communist movement. It was he who largely inspired the resistance to the Comintern of those who subsequently established the Swiss Communist Opposition. However, for reasons which we shall explore, Humbert-Droz remained loyal to the Comintern until after the International Communist Opposition had ceased to exist and never assumed the leadership of the Swiss Opposition.

Humbert-Droz's Opposition to Stalin

During the 1928-29 crisis in the Comintern, the leadership of the Swiss Communist Party at first aligned itself with Bukharin in his largely behind-the-scenes struggle with Stalin. This was the attitude not only of Jules Humbert-Droz, then in Moscow, but of the party hierarchy in Switzerland as well.

Jules Humbert-Droz and the Swiss Communist Opposition



The issue over which Swiss dissidence with Stalin arose was the crisis in the German party. When in Germany a few months before the Comintern's Sixth Congress, Humbert-Droz, as a member of both the Presidium of the CI Executive Committee and of the Comintern Secretariat, argued with the Stalinist leadership of the German Communist Party against the sectarian policy which they were already following. He particularly expressed consternation at their having backed Ernst Thaelmann in the run-off phase of the 1926 presidential election against the Social Democratic-Center Party nominee, thus assuring election of rightist Field Marshal von Hindenburg. Humbert-Droz insisted that the Communists and Social Democrats should join forces to confront the increasingly militant Right in German politics. Thaelmann, Neumann, Remmele, and Ulbricht, the four principal KPD leaders, were deaf to his entreaties.¹

Later, at the time of the Thaelmann-Wittorf Affaire, Humbert-Droz spoke out strongly against what was happening in the German party and against the attitude of the Comintern leadership. He was on vacation in Sochi when announcement was made that the Presidium of the ECCI had reinstated Ernst Thaelmann as leader of the KPD after its own central committee had removed him. The Russian Presidium member Manuilsky and the Hungarian Bela Kun were also vacationing at Sochi, and Humbert-Droz reported that they were as outraged as he was at the reinstatement of Thaelmann, without consultation of the majority of the members of the Presidium, who were outside of Moscow at the time. However, they were not willing to make any public protest.

Humbert-Droz, in contrast, without consulting his two colleagues, dispatched a "declaration" to the Presidium of the Comintern. He said that although he didn't have sufficient facts to pass judgment on the action of the German central committee in discharging Thaelmann, he did want to express his disagreement with the Presidium action reinstating him. He said that this action signified:

1. A revision of the line of the political resolution of the Sixth World Congress on the question of the internal trend of the German Communist Party.

2. A complete discrediting and destruction of all authority of the Central Committee of the party before the working masses, to the benefit of a very uncertain rehabilitation of the personal authority of comrade Thaelmann.

3. An accentuation and aggravation of the internal regime of the German Communist Party in the sense of a factional policy of which the worst results are shown by the events of Hamburg themselves.²

Humbert-Droz ended his "declaration," dated Sochi, October 12, 1928, by stating that "If I had been present in Moscow, I would have voted against this decision."

After studying the documents of the case, the Swiss leader sent a formal letter to the Presidium of the ECCI reiterating his position.³ At the next

meeting of the Presidium, he delivered a long speech on the situation of the German party. He took the side of the conciliator faction in the KPD, and accused the Thaelmann-Neumann leadership of taking positions contrary to those of the Comintern Sixth Congress.⁴

At a further meeting of the Presidium on December 19, 1928, Stalin appeared, mainly to deliver harangues against the Italian Communist Serra (Tasca) and Humbert-Droz. Stalin "defended the policy of the German Communist Party in its entirety, supporting with the Russian example and his authority the claim that the unorganized workers were more revolutionary than the organized. That had the consequence that the German Communists abandoned work in the unions and quit them, so as to be more revolutionary!"⁵

Involvement of Swiss Party Leadership

Meanwhile the Swiss Communist Party leaders were becoming involved in Humbert-Droz's quarrel with Stalin. The German party leaders invited the Swiss party to send a delegate to the KPD conference held on November third and fourth, 1928, and Wieser, a member of the ECCI, went as the Swiss representative. Upon his return home, Wieser wrote a letter "to the presidium of the executive committee of the Comintern, Moscow, in which he first expressed disagreement with the way Thaelmann had been suddenly restored to power, arguing that this would tend to make the German workers lose all confidence in the party. He then commented that at the German party conference the level of debate had been "very low," and those opposed to the Thaelmann leadership had had little chance to express their points of view, and noted that "general suspicion which exists among the leading figures as well as between various tendencies has a depressing effect on a person coming from abroad. It is as if everyone believed that everyone was capable of everything: falsification of votes in the most important meetings, reciprocal espionage, etc." He summed up his letter by saying that "the present orientation of the German Communist Party, as shown at the last party conference, is in contradiction with the decision of the party congress at Essen and with those of the Sixth World Congress. That is my firm conviction."⁶

Wieser's letter was sent by the Swiss Party leadership to the Presidium of the ECCI together with a letter of their own dated November 23, 1928, expressing support for the positions of both Wieser and Humbert-Droz, and asking for a full meeting of the ECCI to review "a) The decisions of the Presidium on the German question . . . b) The work of the Executive and its subsidiary organizations."⁷ A few days later the Swiss party, through Wieser, wrote Humbert-Droz to express support for his position.⁸

The situation of Humbert-Droz in the International was becoming increasingly difficult, however. He had a direct showdown with Stalin and other

Soviet leaders at a meeting of the Presidium of the ECCI on December 19, 1928, called to deal with the German issue. For this meeting Humbert-Droz drew up a lengthy declaration, which he read in French, his native language, "so that it could not be given a false interpretation." He said that he realized that he couldn't change the minds of the majority of the Presidium but felt it necessary to explain his vote against the majority's position. He accused the majority, in two draft letters they proposed to send to the German Party leadership, of assuming the interpretation the German leadership had given to the decisions of the Sixth Congress, when, in fact, these positions had been rejected by the Sixth World Congress. He then went on to note that "the draft letters . . . are lacking in thought and arguments. Never in the history of the Executive have we been faced with proposals so miserable in terms of political content. . . . These texts can only discredit the Presidium and weaken the authority of the International."⁹

Since the letters in question had the strong endorsement of Stalin, it could be imagined that he would not take Humbert-Droz's criticisms lightly. In fact, as Humbert-Droz himself wrote, "Stalin arose furious, and shouted at me in Russian: 'Go to the Devil!'" The Swiss added that "Stalin, beside himself, left the tribune," and remarked that "Never before had I seen him in such rage." Upon his return to the meeting, Stalin "directed at me a speech full of insults and menaces, claiming that I would finish like Trotsky." After Stalin's speech, a draft motion was circulated, signed by Stalin, Molotov, Piatnitzky, Lozovsky, Bell, Kato, Bela Kun, K. Manner, Kuusinen, Purmann, Kolarov and Strechov, which read:

The Presidium of the Executive Committee of the Communist International condemns categorically the hypocritically opportunist declaration of Comrade Humbert-Droz, who seeks in fact to support the Right elements of the German Communist Party.

The Presidium denounces this declaration as an undignified attack on the Comintern.¹⁰

Only Clara Zetkin voted against this resolution, while the Italian Tasca abstained. On the motion to send the two draft letters to the German Party, only Zetkin, Humbert-Droz and Tasca voted in the negative.¹¹

Humbert-Droz's "Loyalist" Reaction

One might have expected that after such a scene Jules Humbert-Droz's career in the Comintern would have come to an end. However, such did not prove to be the case. He asked to be allowed to resign from the Presidium and Secretariat and to return to work in his own party in Switzerland, but Stalin did not allow this. Nor did Stalin permit him to take a trip to South America which had been planned, in his capacity as head of the Latin Secretariat of the

Comintern. Stalin decided that Humbert-Droz would remain in Moscow, nominally in charge of the Latin American Secretariat, but "flanked by two Russian commissars of the majority (Petrovsky and Goussiev)."

Humbert-Droz sought to explain this situation to his Swiss comrades. He wrote that "Stalin . . . could not conceive that a comrade could be loyal in his discipline, and prefers to keep me here under surveillance."¹² But Humbert-Droz's loyalty to the International remained unquestionable, his sense of discipline unchanged. He hoped sooner or later to convince Stalin and the others of the error of their ways. This attitude was to persist for more than a dozen years.

Humbert-Droz wrote his Swiss comrades with regard to the German question that "With the decision taken, as a disciplined minority we conform to it and are applying it."¹³ He added that "My attitude is clear. I have taken part in the meetings of the political Secretariat and of the Presidium, keeping silent on all problems which don't have to do with my South American area, leaving the majority absolutely free to apply its line, without saying anything or doing anything to try to stop them. They alone will have the responsibility for a policy which, to my way of thinking, brings the International dismemberment and isolation from the masses."¹⁴

Humbert-Droz had no more illusions about Stalin's policies in the Soviet Union than about his policies in the Comintern. He wrote the Swiss comrades about "The Trotskyite policy of Stalin with regard to the peasants, and the lack of wheat and of bread which are their consequence."¹⁵

However, Humbert-Droz continued in the Comintern apparatus. After about a year in virtual quarantine in Moscow, he was sent to Buenos Aires at the end of 1929 for the first Latin American Congress of Communist Parties, and he then was assigned to work with the Communist Party of Spain. He remained there for about a year. Finally, in 1931, on the suggestion of Gypner, a young German Communist whom the Comintern had put in charge of the Swiss party, and who was very discouraged with its progress, he was sent back to Switzerland to become head of the party there. As he himself noted, his leadership "was imposed very undemocratically on the Swiss Communist Party."¹⁶ For more than a decade, through various changes in line, Humbert-Droz stayed in charge of the Swiss party. It was not until the middle of World War II that he was finally ousted by Stalin and the ECCI, and was soon afterwards expelled from the party.¹⁷

Reasons for Humbert-Droz's Loyalty to the Comintern

Although the ideas of Jules Humbert-Droz conformed closely to those of the International Communist Opposition, he never joined it. Instead, he remained a loyal functionary and official of the Stalin-dominated Comintern and of its Swiss party. There are several reasons for this seemingly strange

behavior, including his historical view of the Bolshevik Revolution and the Comintern, his role in leadership of the CI in its first decade, his concept of party discipline, his relationship with and the example of Bukharin, and finally, his hope that the Communist International would finally be reformed. This last idea he shared with the ICO, although his strategy for achieving reform was quite different from theirs.

Humbert-Droz himself tried to explain his continued loyalty to the Comintern in terms of his view of its historic role. He wrote that:

I had placed all of my confidence in that organization, I had sacrificed the best years of my life, my family life. The Russian Revolution, in spite of its bureaucratic degeneracy and its internal difficulties, remained the most important event of the century. It had overthrown the Central Empires of the Hohenzollerns and the Hapsburgs, obliged the Western bourgeoisie to concede to the workers rights which it had refused for scores of years, the eight hour day, social security, it had aroused among colonial peoples the will to throw off the yoke of colonialism, had given the oppressed nationalities the right to separate themselves from Russia and to create independent states, Finland, Esthonia, Lithuania, Latvia, Poland, etc.¹⁸

As Humbert-Droz also noted, his role in the Comintern during its first decade was also an important factor. He began his career as a Protestant clergyman in French Switzerland and was a member of the Socialist Youth before and during World War I. His Christian pacifism and Socialist ideas led him to refuse military service and spend a substantial period in jail during the war. This action increased his importance in Socialist ranks, and after the Bolshevik Revolution, he became a principal figure in the left wing of the Swiss Social Democratic Party which wanted to affiliate the party with the new Comintern.

Humbert-Droz was one of two left-wing Swiss Socialist delegates to the Second Congress of the Comintern—the other being Walter Bringolf. Humbert-Droz served as one of the translators of that congress. Back in Moscow for the Third Congress of the Comintern in 1921, this time representing the new Swiss Communist Party, Humbert-Droz had long conversations with Lenin, served as a secretary of the congress, and was named as a member of the Executive Committee of the International and one of the four permanent secretaries of the CI.¹⁹ He remained a member of the Secretariat of the International and a member of the ECCI throughout the rest of the 1920s, and indeed formally until the Seventh and final Congress of the International in 1935. During the 1920s he was principally charged with the affairs of the Latin countries of Europe and with Latin America, and carried out many missions for the Comintern in those areas.²⁰

Undoubtedly another factor in Humbert-Droz's refusal to break with the Comintern was his belief in Lenin's idea of "democratic centralism." He felt that once a decision had been made, all disciplined Communists were obliged

to accept it, and work in conformity with it, even though they were opposed to it. On various occasions from 1929 until the mid-1930s, he swallowed his pride and personal feelings and confessed to "error" in the belief that this was required of a loyal Communist, even though he did not really believe that he had been "in error." With regard to this attitude, his widow Jenny Humbert-Droz has written that "As to his acceptance of Leninist principles in this period, it was, I think, almost total. He never repudiated or detached himself from them."²¹

The behavior of Bukharin and Humbert-Droz's relationship with him were another factor in explaining Humbert-Droz's attitude. Bukharin, although anathematized by Stalin and reduced to a situation of near impotence after 1929, remained a member of the Politburo of the Soviet party, in the hope of regaining some influence and changing the disastrous policies of Stalin.²² Humbert-Droz did much the same thing in the Comintern. He had been an ally of Bukharin within the International, and they were good friends as well as political intimates. In one of his "mea culpa" statements in 1929, he included the comment that "I supported in general the policy of Comrades Bukharin, Rykov and Tomsky, condemned by the party."²³

Stephen Cohen, author of the major biography of Bukharin in English, is convinced that there was something peculiar in Humbert-Droz's relationship with Bukharin. When Cohen interviewed Humbert-Droz in 1966, the Swiss told him that in 1929 Bukharin had suggested to him the need to murder Stalin. However, Humbert-Droz refused to give any details of where such a conversation had taken place. Cohen thinks that perhaps part of the price Humbert-Droz had to pay for not being purged during the 1929-41 period was that he provide the Soviet Secret police with something they could use against Bukharin—ergo, the story about Bukharin's talk about murdering Stalin. However, as Cohen notes, such a charge was not included in the indictment when Bukharin was finally brought to trial and shot in 1938.²⁴

It is also probable that Humbert-Droz did not join the Opposition because he did not approve of its line. His widow has written that "As to how the Brandler-Thalheimer-Lovestone opposition was viewed by my husband. I simply remember that, in spite of his personal regard for Brandler and Thalheimer, he thought their political orientation erroneous, purely reformist, and he did not have any direct political relations with them. . . ."²⁵

Finally, Humbert-Droz stayed in the Comintern for so long because he was able to do so. Many Right Opposition leaders in other countries—Brandler and Thalheimer in Germany, Lovestone in the United States, M. N. Roy in India—had no possibility of remaining inside. They were expelled and had little choice but to organize as oppositionists outside the Comintern. Why Stalin chose not to treat Humbert-Droz in the same way we shall probably never know. However, the fact that he did so made it possible for Humbert-Droz to stay within the Comintern and assured that he would not become a leader of the International Communist Opposition.

Establishment of Communist Opposition

Although Jules Humbert-Droz never became a member of the International Communist Opposition, some of his associates in the Swiss party did, after they were expelled from the official C. P. Undoubtedly because of their close association with Humbert-Droz and their criticism of the Comintern's handling of the German party situation, the Swiss party leadership was purged by the Comintern. *Revolutionary Age* noted early in 1930 that, because of the Swiss party's support of Humbert-Droz, "The ECCI apparatus was set in motion and by the most outrageous methods the majority was 'changed' and the 'struggle against the right danger' initiated." A member of the central committee and formerly of the Politburo of the Swiss party, a certain Thalmann, was first expelled as a "right winger" and a "renegade factionalist."²⁶ A bit later, Wieser was also expelled.²⁷ The management of the affairs of the Swiss party was put in the hands of a young German Communist, Gypner, who had worked with the West European Bureau of the Comintern in Berlin. The new leadership proceeded to condemn Humbert-Droz in "a document full of lies and false accusations."²⁸

The new leadership went on to purge those leaders who still maintained the positions which Humbert-Droz, Wieser, and others had had in 1928-29. Most outstanding was Walter Bringolf, Humbert-Droz's fellow delegate to the Second Congress of the Comintern and the party's principal figure in the Schaffhausen region. He controlled a party paper in that city and was ordered by the new party leadership to turn it over to them. He went to Moscow in mid-1929 to ask Humbert-Droz what to do. As might be expected, Humbert-Droz advised Bringolf to do as the party leadership demanded and to turn over the paper.²⁹ However, Bringolf did not take Humbert-Droz's advice. Instead, he pulled the Schaffhausen branch out of the Communist Party and formed the Communist Party (Opposition). Its birth was announced in the December 6, 1930 issue of *Revolutionary Age*, which noted the Oppositionists' differences with the official party "in estimation of the objective situation, in trade union tactics, on the question of the united front." The article noted that "Altho not as strong as in Schaffhausen, the Opposition is spreading throughout the country,"³⁰ a statement more optimistic than true.

The strongly federalist tradition of Switzerland aided Bringolf. Even in the supposedly highly centralized Swiss Communist Party the cantonal party organizations had had a good deal of autonomy until that point. Hence, Bringolf could resist the pressures of the national leadership and take the whole party organization in Schaffhausen into the new Communist Party (Opposition).³¹

Activities of the CPO

Throughout its short life, the Swiss Communist Opposition centered largely on Schaffhausen and nearby towns, although it had a few branches in

other parts of the country. In a report submitted for the Swiss official party to the ECCI in mid-1932 Humbert-Droz indicated the impact of the defection of the Schaffhausen group on the official party:

In Schaffhausen the party has lost, to the benefit of Bringolf and the renegades, the strong positions which it had in the working class. . . . The mechanical and bureaucratic way in which the decisions of the Fifth congress were applied in the form of expulsions before the workers knew the political reasons, contributed to weakening the authority of the party and of the International and made extremely long and difficult the process of political clarification and the reconquest of lost positions. Furthermore, after the split, our party became almost exclusively an anti-Bringolf party.³²

The strength of the CPO in Schaffhausen and neighboring Neuhausen was shown in municipal elections on October 30, 1932. The official Communist Party did not even participate, but the CPO was the single largest party. It received only one hundred votes less than all the bourgeois parties together, although through quirks of the electoral law it elected only ten of the thirty local councillors.³³ Walter Bringolf was chosen mayor of Schaffhausen "by a big majority."³⁴

The CPO dominated the labor movement in the Schaffhausen area, which although a comparatively small canton, was a significant industrial area, containing much of the country's machine tool industry as well as its watch-making. The backbone of the Communists' strength was the skilled workers in those two fields, and the CPO took over their leadership after the split.³⁵ The CPO also undertook to organize the unemployed. Bringolf himself presided over an action committee of the unemployed, an organization in which the official Communists also participated.³⁶

Like all radical organizations, the Swiss CPO was greatly shaken by the collapse of the Communist and Social Democratic movements in Germany after Hitler came to power. In June 1933, a CPO Plenum adopted a resolution stating that "The defeat of the working class in Germany is characterized especially thru the following features: Political bankruptcy of the coalition policy and reformism, capitulation and collapse of the trade unions, catastrophic defeat of the ultra-left course of the C.P.G. and the leadership of the Comintern, ideological and organizational destruction and disintegration of the proletarian bodies as the effect of the victory of the Fascist dictatorship."

The resolution defined the Swiss CPO's position in conformity with the basic line of the International Communist Opposition: "The central leadership of the C.P. Switz-O declares that today it is politically false to issue the slogan of a new (second or third) party. What is necessary is a clearer and more decisive exposure of the responsibility of reformism and the Second International as well as of the Comintern and of the fraction of the Russian Communist Party within the Comintern for the defeat in Germany." It went on, "In this hour the tasks of the C.P.G.-O and of the International Communist

Opposition are growing rapidly." It called for "the tactics of the united front on the broadest basis, thru the creation of joint anti-Fascist action, thru the intensification of the work in the trade unions." It added that "Not Communism has been defeated, but the ultra-left policy and corrupt apparatus, enforced under instructions of the C.I. and claiming to represent it."³⁷

Early in 1934 it was reported in *Workers Age* that "Our Swiss comrades have engaged in some model activities against the engulfing Fascist menace. The CPO has been especially active and influential in defeating the new emergency laws which would have meant the outlawing of the Communist movement immediately and the destruction of labor organizations afterwards."³⁸

Liquidation of the Swiss CPO

Jenny Humbert-Droz has written that "In Switzerland, the Opposition Communist Party created by Walter Bringolf had only an ephemeral life."³⁹ This is correct. The Swiss party was one of the first of the national Opposition groups to disappear.

In the beginning, particularly after Jules Humbert-Droz was put in charge of the Communist Party of Switzerland by the International, there was hope that reunification with the official party would be possible. Humbert-Droz wrote that Bringolf made several overtures to return to the official party, and that he informed the Comintern that he was going to negotiate with Bringolf on this possibility.⁴⁰ But the reaction of the Comintern was exceedingly hostile. An article in the September 15/October 1, 1932 issue of *Communist International* devoted to criticism of Humbert-Droz's handling of the Swiss Party said:

Instead of resolutely and without mercy denouncing the right-wing renegade Bringolf who has taken over by fraud the organization of the party in Schaffhausen, and who for two years has been carrying on the work of undermining and provocation against the Swiss Communist Party, he shows an attitude of 'confidence' with regard to the overtures made by this social-fascist, hoping that he will be able to rejoin the Communist Party. . . . You have forgotten the 21 conditions of the Communist International, Humbert-Droz!⁴¹

Undoubtedly this unrelenting attitude of the Comintern leadership was a major factor in impelling Bringolf to move in the opposite direction, towards the Swiss Socialist Party, with which he had broken a dozen years before. We have not determined the exact date of the entry of the Communist Oppositionists into the Socialist ranks, but it is known that by 1936 Walter Bringolf was a leading figure in the left wing of the Swiss Socialist Party.

The subsequent careers of Bringolf and Humbert-Droz contained twists of irony. When Humbert-Droz was finally expelled from the Communist movement during World War II, he was almost immediately invited by Bringolf and by the president of the Swiss Socialist Party, Hans Oprecht, to rejoin the Socialist Party. He did so, and soon afterwards was named secretary general of the party, a post he held for more than two decades. During much of this period, Bringolf was his superior, as president of the Swiss Socialist Party. Humbert-Droz died in 1971 as secretary of the Swiss Socialist Party in his home canton of Neuchâtel.⁴²

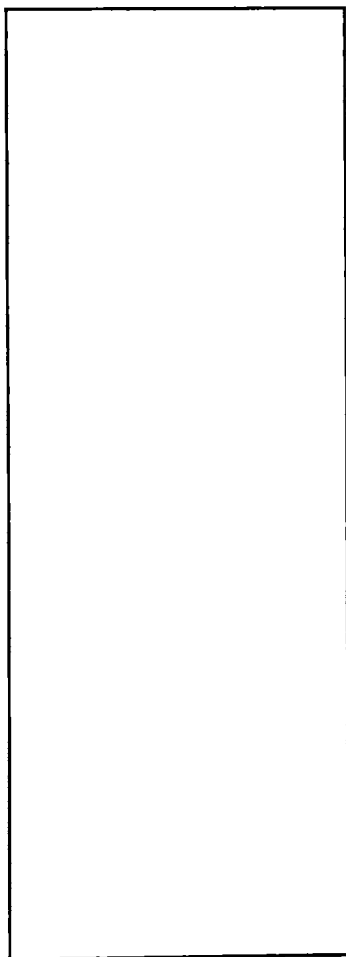
There were four Opposition Communist groups in Scandinavia. These were in Sweden, Norway, Finland, and Denmark. In Sweden virtually the entire official party joined the Opposition, while in Finland the Opposition controlled most of organized labor for a short while. In the other two countries the Communist Opposition was a relatively small element in far Left politics.

The Swedish Communist Party before the Split

Sweden was the only country in which almost all the Communist Party members went over to the Opposition. As a result, the Opposition Communists dominated Swedish far Left politics during the first half of the 1930s. Subsequently, after a major split, many Oppositionists joined the Social Democrats, while those remaining in the party evolved, after further splits, in a pro-Nazi direction. The group disappeared finally in 1946.

Those who were ultimately to lead the Swedish Communist Party (SKP) into the International Communist Opposition had come to power within the party in the wake of an earlier split in 1924. Franz Borkenau has noted that after 1924 the Communist Party of

The Scandinavian Communist Opposition



Sweden flourished, that "from about eight thousand members it had increased to eighteen thousand under its new leaders. . . . It was still a small party compared with the socialists, but a rising one. The Swedish party had done competent work within the trade unions."¹

The three principal figures in the Swedish Communist Party during this period were Karl Kilbom, Oskar Samuelsson and Nils Flyg. Of these, Kilbom was the most outstanding. A. F. Upton has commented that Kilbom was "an administratively gifted man . . . used most of his energy for building up the party organization . . . and the press." He was "a diligent and popular delegate to the Comintern, and was close to Bucharin."²

Under the leadership of Kilbom, Samuelsson, and Flyg, the SKP won the greatest electoral influence Swedish Communism was ever to achieve. In the 1928 elections for the lower house of the national parliament, the SKP received 151,567 votes, or 6.4 percent of the total.³ Party membership and organization also expanded considerably. E. Karas, writing in *Revolutionary Age* early in 1930, reported that whereas in 1924 the SKP had 7,011 members in 263 local organizations, it had 13,058 in 302 locals by early 1927, and 18,000 members before the split in 1929.⁴

Communist influence in organized labor was modest but significant. Bernt Kennerstrom has estimated that before the party split, the Communists controlled about 20 percent of the labor movement, the Social Democrats having virtually all the rest. During the late 1920s, the Communists were the "loyal opposition" within the Social Democratic controlled unions.⁵

Split with the Comintern

Although the SKP leaders were generally considered by themselves and by the Comintern as faithful to Moscow, they were by no means completely subservient to the Comintern and the CPSU. Upton has noted that "they were no weak-minded copycats. Thus the party chairman, Kilbom himself, was often critical about Russian policies, but then he also regarded the Soviet Union as 'the foremost bastion of the international working class' and was determined to defend the Soviet Union."⁶ Franz Borkenau has noted one characteristic of the Swedish party which differentiated it from most of its sister parties: it was financially independent of Moscow.⁷ Upton has explained at least part of this independence. Speaking of Kilbom, he says that "When necessary, he did not hesitate to borrow money from the capitalist banks."⁸

Certainly the relative autonomy of the SKP did not suit the needs of the Stalinist epoch in the Comintern. Furthermore, Kilbom and other SKP leaders were closely associated with Bukharin. This meant that after the Sixth Congress of the Comintern they would either be scheduled for elimination or for more or less humiliating "self-criticism" and subsequent surrender to the Stalin regime in the CI. They chose the former of these alternatives.

Criticism of the Swedish party leadership by the Stalinists started at the Comintern Sixth Congress. There, according to E. Karas, the German Stalinist Hermann Remele "suddenly discovered that Swedish capitalism was already a 'distinct' and 'leading' imperialist power." Samuelsson, of the SKP, rebutted this idea, saying that Sweden certainly had imperialist tendencies but that it couldn't be compared with the United States, Great Britain and France. His position was upheld by the Sixth Congress. However, soon after the congress, the new ECCI sent the Swedish party a letter stating that the position of Remele had been the correct one. The representative in Sweden of the Young Communist International also began a campaign to get the Swedish party to adopt the Remele "line."⁹

The ECCI letter to the SKP demanded that there be a special meeting of the Plenum of the Swedish Central Committee, which met early in July 1929. E. Karas noted that "a whole list of ECCI representatives and representatives of the various parties came to attempt to overawe the Plenum." The meeting ended with two resolutions, one for the majority and the other for the minority (supporting Moscow's position).

Thereupon, the ECCI demanded "negotiations." As a result a four man delegation, composed of Samuelsson, Flyg, and two representatives of the minority, was sent to Moscow. A special commission was convened for the occasion. Karas noted that "Samuelsson was heckled by Manuilsky, Ulbricht, Reimann, Remele, Furmann, Rust, etc.," was asked to "confess his errors," and refused. Samuelsson and Flyg then returned home for a party demonstration planned for August 1; and thereafter Kilbom and Olsson took their places in Moscow, and they finally agreed, with many reservations, to sign an open letter calling for a four month discussion period within the Swedish party, followed by a new congress to decide the questions at issue.¹⁰

As this controversy was developing, Hugo Sillen emerged as leader of the pro-Moscow elements. The issue of how the international role of Sweden should be categorized remained a major question. As August Spangberg has said, "The Sillen group wanted the party to characterize Sweden as an imperialist nation preparing for war against the Soviet Union and to insist that the Social Democrats took an active part in this planning. The Kilbom group stated that Sweden was to be viewed as a neutral country not planning to wage war with any nation and that the Social Democrats indeed were against anything like that."¹¹ When the SKP faction in the Riksdag introduced a bill calling for dissolution of the Swedish armed forces, Sillen denounced it as "causing confusion within the ranks of the working class," because it didn't mention "the preparations of the Swedish bourgeoisie to start a war with the Soviet Union," or the "deceitful action of the Social Democrats in using disarmament as a link in the planning of war with the Soviet Union."¹²

The SKP leadership was attacked on the widest scale by the Sillen faction and the Comintern. As Spangberg has written, "the representatives of the Comintern criticized the work of the Swedish Communist Party, both for its

internal party work and its political conduct."¹³ The party's trade union policy of recent years, which had resulted in formation of the Soviet-Swedish Trade Union Unity movement, was branded "treason, capitulation before reformism."¹⁴ The party leadership was likewise attacked because on several occasions the Riksdag had actually passed bills introduced by the Communists. Even the fact that the party's 1929 May Day demonstration was cancelled because of a large snowstorm was denounced, with the Sillen group raising the rhetorical question, "How can a party not able to cope with a snow storm lead a revolution?"¹⁵

Meanwhile, the Tenth Plenum of the ECCI, called to purge the Comintern and its parties of all Bukharinist or other anti-Stalin influences, took up the Swedish case in August 1929. It "settled" the issue of Sweden's international role by categorizing that country as "an imperialism of the 'first rank.'" Manuilsky, Reimann and Gottwald claimed that the Swedish Communists' policy had been wrong for years "because of their false estimation of Swedish capitalism."¹⁶

After the Tenth Plenum an ECCI delegation was sent to Sweden to supervise the taking over of the party by the pro-Stalinists. However, they did not succeed, but only were able to split away a small minority to follow Moscow's line. On October 9, at a meeting outside the Communist headquarters, which had been seized by the Sillen faction, the ECCI delegation officially expelled the majority group from the Comintern.

The Opposition SKP

The Tenth Plenum of the ECCI had demanded that a new Swedish party congress be held. The Kilbom-Samuelsson-Flyg faction held the Eighth Congress of the Party between November 16 and 19, 1929, attended by 202 regular delegates and various fraternal ones. Among those present were seven of the eight members of parliament—one staying neutral for a time, but ultimately joining his colleagues. August Spangberg has written that the delegates included representatives of 164 party locals and 97 youth clubs.¹⁷ All municipal councilmen of the party in the city councils of Stockholm, Göteborg, and Norrköping went with the majority group. It also kept control of the party daily *Folkets Dagblad*, with a circulation of between twenty and thirty thousand copies, as well as of two provincial party papers. The pro-Comintern group controlled only one daily paper, in Nordbotten in the north, with a circulation of five thousand and one provincial weekly with an issue of three thousand copies. The Kilbom group also kept control of all party papers issued for women, peasants, trade unionists, and other specialized groups.¹⁸

Most party members stayed with the Kilbom group. Bernt Kennerstrom has estimated that of the seventeen thousand members with which he credits the party before the split, seven thousand stayed with Kilbom and four thousand

were loyal to the Comintern. The rest "remained passive at least for the moment."¹⁹ The Kilbom group claimed they had the "practically unanimous support" of the party in Stockholm, as well as units in Södermannsland, Uppland, Dalarna, and in virtually all other parts of the country except the Norrbotten-Smoland District in the north. They claimed twelve to fourteen thousand party members, and said that only four or five thousand had split with the Sillen faction.²⁰ Nils Flyg, reporting to the founding congress of the International Communist Opposition, said that twenty of the twenty-three district organizations of the party stayed with the Kilbom group. However, he admitted that "The Comintern people were able to retain control of the Young Communist League . . . at the time of the split. But we got a good following anyway . . . amounting to about 5-6,000 members."²¹

The Kilbom group continued to insist that it was part of the Comintern, continuing to use the name "Communist Party of Sweden, Section of the Communist International." They officially decided to appeal their expulsion to the Seventh Congress of the Comintern, which should have been held shortly, but did not meet until mid-1935.²²

The Sillen faction had its own eighth congress shortly after that of the Kilbom group. They reported that it was marked by "complete unity." It adopted a resolution giving the reasons for the split in the following terms:

Instead of promoting the bolshevizing of the party, the Kilbom-Samuelsson-Flyg leadership has continued the old left-socialist traditions in many fields. Their activity was limited mainly to the numerical strengthening of the party, likewise to raising the party's share of the vote of elections, and increasing subscriptions to the party press. To bring up the party in a spirit which would raise its fighting fitness and revolutionary determination, and create a clear bolshevik line was considered by this party leadership a secondary task.²³

Electoral Fortunes of the Communist Opposition

Throughout their existence the Swedish Communist Oppositionists participated in elections. During the early years they did exceedingly well, but in the late 1930s and thereafter they were much less successful, a factor which contributed to the disintegration of the group.

The first major electoral test of the Communist Opposition came in the county council elections of 1930. They did comparatively well. The Social Democrats reported that they received 33,691 votes, and credited them with an increase of 10,376 over the previous parliamentary contest.²⁴ The Communist Opposition also did relatively well in the parliamentary election of 1932, although they lost two of their eight members in the Riksdag.²⁵ The Oppositionists' votes amounted to 5.7 percent of the total, compared to 3.9 percent for the Comintern party, and 41.7 percent for the Social Democrats.²⁶ In the 1932 contest, as two years earlier, the Oppositionists surpassed the official Commu-

nists in most parts of the country. *Workers Age* reported that in the industrial parts of Stockholm, the Oppositionists received 29,776 votes, compared with 5,056 for the official Communists. In Upsala the official party received only 69 votes, the Oppositionists 6,174; in Soernland the Stalinists got only 164 votes and the Oppositionists 4,417. However, in the officialist strongholds of Göteborg, Norbotten, and Westhörnland, the official Communists "succeeded in getting a trifle more than we did. In a number of other districts, too, we did not make out as well as we might."²⁷

In the provincial elections of 1934 the Oppositionists gained some ground, but not as much as the Comintern party, although the Oppositionists still remained more popular than their rivals. The Kilbom party got fifty-eight thousand votes, a gain of twenty-three thousand; the official Communists received forty-two thousand, a gain of twenty-four thousand. The Social Democrats got six hundred and twenty-eight thousand votes, a gain of one hundred and eight thousand.²⁸ By the time of these 1934 elections, the Oppositionist Communists (who had changed their name to Socialist Party), had won a foothold in Göteborg, a stronghold of the official party, because the Social Democratic Party in that area was controlled by Leftist opponents of the official SDP leadership, and as a result was expelled from the national party in 1934. As Kennerstrom has noted, "The SP proved to be an attractive alternative for the Social Democratic opposition in Göteborg, the immediate political demands of the SP corresponded with their own, and they shared the criticism of the Ultra-Left and its Social-Fascism theory. In the Spring of 1934 the SP and the Opposition joined," giving the Opposition four thousand new members.²⁹

In the 1936 parliamentary election the Oppositionists received some 127,740 votes, 4.3 percent of the total, in comparison with the 5.7 percent they had gotten four years earlier. In contrast, the official CP got 94,233 votes or 3.2 percent, a small rise from the 3 percent of 1932. The Kilbom group maintained its six members in parliament, whereas the Comintern party increased its membership from two to five. The Social Democrats raised their percentage of the total vote from 41.7 percent in 1932 to 45.9 percent in 1936.³⁰

By 1938, the Communist Oppositionists had lost considerable ground with the electorate. In provincial elections of that year, their vote was 48,963, or 1.9 percent of the total, compared with 4 percent in the previous provincial poll of 1934. The official Communist vote rose to 98,677, or 3.9 percent for the first time passing that of the Oppositionists.³¹

The final electoral disaster for the Socialist Party came in the parliamentary poll of 1940. It elected no members to the national legislature, and virtually ceased to be an element of importance in national politics.³²

Trade Union Work of Opposition Communists

One area in which the Swedish Oppositionists were particularly involved was the trade union movement. They played a significant although secondary

role throughout the 1930s, yet as time went on, their influence among the organized workers declined. Bernt Kennerstrom, writing about the first half of the 1930s, has noted that "Except for the Sailors Union, in which the SP achieved a majority in the leadership by a far-reaching loyal opposition, those years were marked by defeats, retreats, and declining influence of the trade union opposition." He adds that "The splitting of the trade union left and the deep inner contradiction made effective opposition work more difficult, and also contributed to the ability of the reformist leadership to strengthen and consolidate its previously threatened preponderance during the years of the economic depression." Finally, he comments that "Although the policy of loyal opposition in the trade unions was anything but successful, it was obviously very close to the heart of the majority of the party."³³

Other Activities of Oppositionists

Sometimes activities of the Swedish Communist Oppositionists came to the attention of their confreres in other countries. Early in 1933 *Workers Age* noted that the SKP had mounted a campaign in favor of M. N. Roy, the Indian Communist Oppositionist then in jail. *Workers Age* also carried news of the activities of the Swedish CPO in organizing the unemployed: "Thru our initiative, an Unemployment Central Committee has been set up, with syndicalist and Social-democratic organizations and non-party workers." A national unemployed workers conference was held in January 1933, at which "only trade unions and unemployed bodies [were] represented."³⁴

In 1932 the Communist Opposition was the target of a campaign by both Comintern Communists and Social Democrats concerning alleged subsidies to the party newspaper *Folkets Dagblad* by Ivar Krueger, the "Swedish match king." However, the Communist Oppositionists explained that as early as 1925 Karl Kilbom, on orders of the Comintern, had sought and received a loan from a Krueger bank at 6 percent interest to help establish the German Communist paper, *Welt an Abend*. In 1929 the *Folkets Dagblad* had gotten a loan from another Krueger bank, and "This loan was also made in perfect business order, just as any business loan is made." Finally, it was noted that *Folkets Dagblad* had brought a libel suit against the mayor of Stockholm for spreading the report that the paper had received a "subsidy" from Krueger.³⁵

Soon after Ivar Krueger committed suicide, following the collapse of his firm, a *Workers Age* article noted that the Social Democrats had charged the SKP with receiving one hundred thousand kroner from Krueger for its paper "to render it subservient to himself and his interests." However, the article said that when Krueger was still strong, the SKP "had thundered against the Krueger manipulations," while the Social Democratic press "has maintained and still maintains a very friendly and conciliatory attitude towards Krueger."³⁶ *Workers Age* likewise reported on a rally of some four thousand workers in Stockholm which passed a resolution to the effect that "We declare

that in the Krueger collapse *Folkets Dagblad* has been and is today the only paper to speak consistently for the working class. We call upon all revolutionary workers to close their ranks against a system that breeds and permits such swindles and scandals as the Krueger affair."³⁷

Several years later, *Workers Age* noted the activities of the Communist Oppositionists (by then the Socialist Party) on behalf of the Republican side in the Spanish Civil War. It commented: "The Socialist Party and the syndicalists are the only ones advocating any direct action. They are agitating for a boycott on Swedish shipments of iron ore to Germany, which by the way constitute about 45 percent of the latter's total iron import and without which Hitler could not supply Franco with war materials, in view of his own needs in that field."³⁸

Periodically the Communist Oppositionists held national congresses, which were often the occasion for membership drives. In preparation for a special congress in May 1932 they held an organization drive of three weeks' duration and established forty new youth groups and thirty new party organizations, with two thousand new members, as well as gaining two thousand new readers for *Folkets Dagblad*.³⁹

Split of Swedish Oppositionists with ICO

The Kilbom group only stayed with the International Communist Opposition for half a decade. It broke with the ICO over the issue of whether the Oppositionists should continue to consider themselves integral members of the international Communist movement. This issue began to arise as early as 1932. In a resolution of a conference of the United States CPO it was noted that "There are some (Swedish Opposition) who regard the present crisis in the world Communist movement as essentially incurable on the basis of the rehabilitation of the existing Communist International and the existing Communist Parties thru the radical transformation of their orientation, policies and methods of leadership. They believe that the only realistic perspective is the emergence of the Opposition into Communist Parties, where they are not such already, or at least conscious and deliberate activity in such a direction, and on a world scale a new International."⁴⁰

The issues between the Swedish Oppositionists and the International Communist Opposition were discussed in a letter "To the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Sweden," adopted at an enlarged buro meeting of the ICO in July 1933. The Buro questioned the decision of the Swedes to send delegates to a meeting of the Union of Socialist Parties in August 1933. The union was a group of parties affiliated with neither the Socialist nor Communist International, and included the Independent Labor Party of Great Britain, the Norwegian Labor Party, and the German Socialist Workers Party (SAP).

The ICO letter asserted that "The I.C.O. supports and welcomes all efforts to form a united front of all working class organizations against the capitalist offensive, fascism and the imperialist preparations for another war." However, "the I.C.O. . . . is opposed to participating in the projected conference," since "the practical result . . . would inevitably be the preparation for the founding of a new International whose basis fundamentally could be only of a centrist, or in other words, of an anti-communist and anti-Bolshevist character." The ICO reminded its Swedish comrades that the International Opposition was fighting for "rebuilding of the C.I. as will enable it to organize united struggles of the masses which will lay the basis for winning the majority of the working class for communism, and lead to a successful revolution." However, it added that the ICO was opposed to "any attempt to establish a new International of a centrist character."⁴¹

The letter chided the Swedes: "You in your letter cast doubts on the possibility of reforming the Comintern. Your opinion can be based only on the belief that the C.I. has ceased to be an organization which represents the working class." The ICO challenged the Swedish party's claim that "The Comintern is in fact though not formally, an instrument of the foreign policy of the Soviet Union, which does not always work in the interests of the international working class regardless of the interests of the Russian State." The ICO asked rhetorically, "Where does this position lead? Are you of the opinion that there is in the Soviet Union a proletarian dictatorship? When you state that the interests of the Russian State . . . are contrary to those of the international working class, then you are saying that proletarian dictatorship is harmful to the international labor movement."⁴²

Domestic positions of the Swedish CP also drew criticism from the ICO. The Buro letter lectured the Swedes: "Only a Communist Party which holds firmly to its principles and which, unlike the C.I., follows correct tactics, can apply these principles in practice and enlighten the masses."⁴³ The letter then became more specific: "The danger you run when you make concessions of principle is shown by the program of action for a 'Peoples Front for Work and Bread,' issued by the executive committee of your party." Although the Swedish party sought "to form a broad united front against fascism," this wouldn't come about because "you, at the sacrifice of communist principle, are making concessions to those reactionary petty bourgeois prejudices to which fascism appeals with its demagogy. Instead of a proletarian united front you advocate a 'peoples front'; instead of working for the joining of all *workers' organizations*, you appeal to *all* political organizations."⁴⁴

This ICO letter ended by asserting that "We are appealing to you to come around to our point of view. . . . The traditions of your party place upon you the duty of preventing your splendid organization, composed of the best elements in the Swedish working class, from being destroyed through a deviation from the communist position."⁴⁵

The appeal of the ICO had little effect on the Swedish Communist Party. A letter of the Buro of the ICO to the CPO of the United States signed by Heinrich

Brandler, and dated December 10, 1933, claimed that "In Sweden the leadership of the Communist Party of Sweden has gone over to centrism and opportunism."⁴⁶ Seven months later the national committee of the CPO of the United States adopted a resolution which said that "In our former Swedish section the leadership has gone over to centrism, dropped the name of Communist and adopted the name Socialist.* Under these circumstances the break with the ICO was unavoidable."⁴⁷

The International Communist Opposition sought to organize those in the Swedish group who supported its position. *Workers Age* reported in April 1934 that "The fight in what was once the Swedish CPO has assumed very tense forms. The Kilbom leadership is swinging sharply to the right. . . . On the other hand, the opposition to Kilbom is growing, especially among the youth. In the Stockholm youth organization the Kilbom leadership was routed. The entire youth organization, with the exception of but 9 votes, decided to remain with the ICO and to fight against the centrist policies of Kilbom."⁴⁸ However, in spite of this optimistic report, no permanent organization of ICO supporters was established in Sweden once the Communist Party of Sweden had abandoned the ICO ranks.

Between the Swedish Oppositionists' break with the ICO and the outbreak of World War II, the Socialist Party was associated internationally with the loosely knit "centrist" group to whose 1933 congress it had sent delegates. The ICO itself joined hands with that group after its own final break with Stalinism in the 1938-39 period. Thus, the Swedish Socialist Party once again had more or less cordial relations with the ICO, particularly with the Lovestoneites in the United States.

Evolution of Swedish Socialist Party Policy

The policy of the Swedish Oppositionists (by then the Socialist Party) was very much influenced by the shift of the pro-Moscow Communists as a result of the Comintern's adoption of Popular Frontism. Indeed, the Socialist Party and the pro-Moscow Communist Party seemed to switch positions. Bernt Kennerstrom has summed up this change: "In the third period of the Comintern the SP had emphasized the active defense of bourgeois democracy against fascism; now it tended to equate them, as had been done before by the C.I."⁴⁹ This peculiar switching of positions became obvious during the Italian invasion of Ethiopia in 1935, when there was an upsurge of public opinion in Sweden against Mussolini's move and in support of League of Nations' sanctions against Italy. However, "the SP refused . . . to abandon its traditional negative position toward the League, which it saw as merely the instrument of the imperialist Entente powers, and rejected the idea of Swedish participation in

*The Stalinists thus became the sole Swedish Communist Party (SKP).

the sanctions policy. The conflict was seen as an internal imperialist controversy . . . and the SP refused to take a position in it and demanded the neutrality of Sweden." Kennerstrom has added that "The party could not present . . . a convincing alternative policy toward support of Abyssinia and was partly isolated."⁵⁰

Kennerstrom has noted that the change in Comintern policy "created the opportunity for collaboration" of the Socialist Party and the official Communists. However, "attempts of the SKP [Stalinists] to bring about collaboration were received critically by the SP . . . and only after long discussions did the SP accept momentary tactical collaboration."⁵¹ Kennerstrom has summed up this situation thus:

It is easy to recognize how the SP permitted itself simply to be driven from its original political platform. The position of Swedish working class radicalism might have been strengthened by the fact that the SP now shared its former space with the SKP; but this idea was weakly represented in the party. Instead, the party saw itself compelled to construct a new platform, which represented a new moment in its self-understanding; earlier the SP had emphasized its desire for a broad grouping of the workers, now it stressed the party's absolutely exclusive role as the representatives of socialism in Sweden. The new policy of the SKP had as it were penetrated into the original territory of the SP and had driven the party into another region, which was marked by sectarian and firmly principled self-satisfaction. The party chairman Nils Flyg took a particularly strong stand for the new policy.⁵²

Splits and Decline of Swedish Opposition

Although the Oppositionists continued to gain ground for a couple years after the split with the ICO, they entered a long period of crisis after the election of 1936, which resulted in the loss of about five thousand votes,⁵³ although the party maintained its six members of parliament.⁵⁴ This election was considered a serious defeat by the party leadership, and the basic question was raised as to whether to maintain the party at all. A split on this developed in the party leadership. Party chairman Nils Flyg was strongly opposed to liquidating the Socialist Party. However, two opposing factions developed within the party after the 1936 election. Kennerstrom noted that "Both favored a policy favorable to the Peoples Front, but that led by Samuelsson desired a rapprochement with the Social Democracy, while the other under Kilbom preferred the SKP." He added that "In the Spring of 1937 the two opposition factions joined in favoring an attempt to join the Social Democrats, but the leading representatives were expelled in May."⁵⁵

Those expelled from the Socialist Party were not immediately accepted by the Social Democrats. It was early 1938 before *International Information*, organ of the Labor and Socialist International, noted that the Swedish Socialist

Party "has disintegrated and several of its leaders and parliamentary representatives have asked to be readmitted to the Social Democratic Party." The article commented that "Now the Executive of the Swedish Social-Democratic Party has decided to allow reaffiliation to Karl Kilbom, Oskar Samuelsson, Ossian Kristensen and Viktor Karlsson."⁵⁶

Kennerstrom asserted that the 1937 split "led to a collapse of the party." A year later its membership had fallen to between five and six thousand members. Kennerstrom observed that "In all probability a minority of those who quit the party joined either the SKP or the Social Democrats, but the majority became passive."⁵⁷ August Spangberg has written that after 1937 "The financial situation grew worse and because of this the party lost its possibilities to make the propaganda necessary for its existence. Now the very survival of the party was at stake. The banks refused to lend money to the party leadership, already heavily in debt." Spangberg has added that by 1940 the decline of the Socialist Party had proceeded to the point that it was unable to elect any members of parliament, and that "after that the party became a puppet for the Nazis and got financial support from the German Third Reich. It ceased to exist in 1946."⁵⁸

Reasons for Collapse of the Swedish Opposition

Bernt Kennerstrom has summed up the reasons for the decline and ultimate disappearance of the Swedish Communist Opposition:

The ultraleft policy of the Comintern made the SP possible; its Peoples Front policy made it impossible. The decline of the SP is therefore not to be explained by its position in general between the two Internationals, it does not rest upon a spatial position as such. When the political relations corresponded with the spatial in the years 1929-34, there was no problem for the composition of the party. The spatial intermediate position became a problem for the party when it no longer stood between the two Internationals, but to their left. In this situation, the party lost its operational space.⁵⁹

Kennerstrom's explanation is only partly true. The fact remains that the Social Democratic Party had traditionally been closely aligned with the trade union movement; and no Communist group, Soviet-aligned or Oppositionist, was able seriously to undermine this alignment. Furthermore, the Social Democrats, in control of the government during most of the life of the Communist Opposition, were able to carry out policies sufficiently attractive to the workers not only to assure their constant reelection (they remained in office until 1976) but to strengthen their control over organized labor.

On the other hand, by revolting against Moscow, the Swedish Oppositionists broke with the only thing which could provide them a real reason to exist. Although close association with the Soviet Union could sometimes prove a handicap, the Moscow-oriented Communists of Sweden, as elsewhere, benefitted (until the splintering of the international Communist movement in the

1960s) from the conviction that they were participating in a movement destined to ultimate victory. Also, this association provided a close identification with one of the great historical events of the twentieth century, the Russian Revolution, and with an ideology which provided answers to virtually all questions. Finally, close association with and subordination to the Soviet Union provided material backing, in financial and other ways, which helped keep the pro-Moscow Communist Party going even in periods when its policies were very unpopular.

The Mot Dag of Norway

Norway's Communist Opposition was the only such group whose existence as an autonomous political organization considerably antedated the Comintern purge of 1929. Its history covered the period from World War I until the mid-30s when it merged with the Norwegian Labor Party. It owed its existence largely to one man, Erling Falk.

Erling Falk had lived in the United States from 1907 to 1918, and had been active there in the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW). On his return home he undertook the organization of university students for the Norwegian Labor Party. With some of these young people he founded a review, *Mot Dag* (*Towards Dawn*), and before long there developed around the review a political organization of a few hundred people, mainly students in Oslo and Trondheim.⁶⁰

The Labor Party had joined the Communist International soon after the Comintern was established. However, it refused to adhere to the "Twenty-One Points" adopted at the Second Congress of the International in 1920. It particularly refused to change its name to Communist Party, to make its organizational structure conform to the pattern laid down by the CI, and to purge its leadership of so-called "reformists." The controversy over these matters lasted several years and finally resulted in the expulsion of the Norwegian Labor Party from the Comintern. The Norwegian Communist Party was formed by a small minority which withdrew from Labor's ranks.⁶¹

During this controversy the *Mot Dag* group took the "national" side, supporting the Labor Party. However, in 1925 a conflict broke out between Erling Falk and the major Labor Party leader, Martin Tranmael. This resulted in Falk and his followers being expelled from the Labor Party. They joined the Communist Party almost a year and a half later.

Erling Falk visited Germany in 1928, where he made the acquaintance of Heinrich Brandler and developed a close political association with the Brandler-Thalheimer group in the German party. As a direct result, when the purge of "Bukharinites" took place in the Comintern parties, Falk and *Mot Dag* were immediate victims of it and were expelled from the Norwegian Communist Party.⁶² Trygve Bull, the historian of the *Mot Dag* group, has written

about this: "We learned, all of us, during the years 1927-1928 what the CI was, and what sort of methods they used, although 'Stalinism' was just emerging. None of us needed to be taught that lesson once more." He has also noted that the "MD maintained its cohesion as a group throughout its whole CP period (1926-1929). We lost two or three members who stayed on in the CP, but in my opinion their communist membership was more of a camouflage for a wish to emancipate themselves from the dominance of Falk's personality. The most important man among those who stayed on, Mr. Viggo Hansteen, who was later to be shot by the Germans during the war (September 1941), left the CP again in connection with the Finnish winter war."⁶³

The Mot Dag group joined the International Communist Opposition at its inception, but remained in the ICO only four years. Halvard Bojer, a one-time leader of the Mot Dag, has written that in 1933 "the Swedes and ourselves thought that a joining of forces of all leftist groups outside the Comintern would be advisable, while Brandler in Germany and Lovestone in USA believed in a more strict communist line, aiming at being recognized again by Moscow as worthy communists and more able ones than the 'Ultra Left' leaders in the official Communist parties."⁶⁴ As a result, Mot Dag sent delegates to the Paris conference of independent left-wing parties in Paris in 1933.⁶⁵

For a while, during Trotsky's residence in Norway, there was a small Trotskyite group inside the Mot Dag. However, after Erling Falk became ill and retired from active leadership, his successors forbade all members of Mot Dag to have anything to do with Trotsky.⁶⁶

Mot Dag was finally dissolved in 1936, when it was decided that all its members should join the Labor Party. Trygve Bull has written: "The reasons for the dissolution of the group in 1936 were the following: a. Falk's severe illness (he developed a tumor of the brain), b. The threat from fascism, externally and internally, which made a unification of the whole labor movement a necessity, c. The formation of a labor government in 1935, which was in extreme need of just the specially qualified people that M.D. possessed."⁶⁷ Bull added that "If unification of the labor movement was to be attained, there was in our opinion only one choice at that time: to enter the LP. The CP was a small intransigent sect. . . . That our judgment was right in this last respect was shown in 1940 when the CP, in fact, took the side of the invaders because of the Russo-German entente at the time."⁶⁸

Throughout its existence Mot Dag was relatively small. Trygve Bull estimated that it never had more than two hundred members at any one time. However, he remarked that "there were organized groups of sympathizers, especially in the academic world, which comprised two or three times as many people. M.D. completely dominated the organization of University students, especially in Oslo, from 1925 until the war."⁶⁹ In organized labor it had influence in only one union. Halvard Bojer noted that "early in 1933 we exerted a considerable influence in the Union of Farm Hands and Lumbermen, where our member, the lumberman Ole Kiste, led a vigorous opposition against the

Labor Party union leadership, although being defeated at the 1933 convention of the union."⁷⁰

A footnote to the history of Mot Dag is the short association with it of Willy Brandt, the post-war German Social Democratic leader. Trygve Bull has written that "Willy Brandt joined the group—at least socially—when he came to Norway in the summer of 1933, but—in full agreement with Falk and the group—he soon joined the youth organization of the Norwegian LP."⁷¹ Halvard Bojer has also commented that Brandt "alternated a bit between the Labor Party and our group, being in our group a de facto member during 1934 and half of 1935, but at the same time taking frequent part in meetings and events in the Labor Party youth organization."⁷²

The Finnish Communist Opposition

The Finnish Communist Opposition, for reasons beyond its own control, was probably the most short-lived of the national Right Opposition groups. It is not even clear whether it ever formally affiliated with the ICO.

During the 1920s most of Finnish organized labor (the SAJ) was led by the Finnish Communist Party, which had been founded in Moscow in 1918.⁷³ However, for several years prior to 1929 there was considerable discontent among Communist trade unionists over control of the Finnish Party by its exiled Political Bureau in Moscow. The climax was reached at the Eighth Congress of the SAJ in May 1929, when "even the most trusted Communists failed to obey orders from the Politburo of the Finnish Communist Party."⁷⁴ John Hodgson has noted that "By the late summer of 1929 the situation within the Left labor movement in Finland was explosive. Finnish trade union leaders were described by Moscow as never having really been in sympathy with Communism."⁷⁵ However, the trade union revolt remained somewhat inchoate until Eino Pekkala, vice chairman of the Communist and Left Socialist Bloc in the Finnish Parliament, and Hugo M. Akohanta broke with the party leadership. Akohanta published an article, signed by "A Group of Left Workers," which "represented the first public expression of group opposition to Moscow." The article attacked extremists working against the decisions of the Eighth Congress of the SAJ.⁷⁶

On December 7, 1929, at a meeting attended by seventeen men, the Left group of Finnish Workers (Suomen Työväen Vasemmistoryhmä—STV) was established. Emil Tuomi reported to this meeting on the split in the Left labor movement and "noted that the division was due to an incorrect appraisal of the Finnish situation: the extreme left . . . judged the situation more revolutionary, the masses more active and the disruptive work of Social Democrats in the trade union movement less significant than was actually the case." On Tuomi's suggestion, a six-man central committee of the STV was elected, consisting of E. Pekkala as chairman, U. Nurminen as vice chairman, H.M. Akohanta as

secretary and E. Tuomi, K. Kulo, and R. Raatikainen as members.⁷⁷ This new central committee published an open letter which asserted that "It is alleged that in Finland today there is an especially tense and revolutionary situation; the broad masses of workers are supposedly ready for revolution, which, it is said, would occur if one could only get rid of certain leaders who retard the course of developments."⁷⁸

In January 1930 the Left group of Finnish Workers began publishing a newspaper, with an editorial board consisting of E. Pekkala, E. Tuomi, U. Nurminen, O. Jalava, and D. Karvenen and Hugo Akohanta as assistant to the managing editor and the political editor.⁷⁹ John Hodgson has noted that this Opposition newspaper stressed three main themes:

1. The split within the Left labor movement is a direct result of the revolutionary line announced by the Sixth Comintern Congress.
2. Finnish workers must be masters in their own house because only they know what the real situation is in Finland.
3. Trade union unity must be preserved; the views of all trade unionists (Left Socialist, Communists, Social Democrats, and those who are "apolitical") must be respected. For this reason the Trade Union Organization cannot be a political party or assume those tasks which belong to political parties.⁸⁰

Within a few months the Finnish Oppositionists found themselves split on an issue familiar throughout the International Communist Opposition—whether to form a new party between the Social Democrats and the Communists. The majority decided to do so. N. Wallari, K. Kulo, M. Vaisanen, H. M. Akohanta, U. Nurminen, E. Harma, L. Harma, and O. Jalava were elected to the central committee of the new group. E. Pekkala and E. Tuomi were opposed to the idea and didn't join the new party.⁸¹ The resolution announcing establishment of the party said that "while fighting the Social Democratic Party, which has sunk into class conciliation, and all bourgeois parties—we also strongly oppose the efforts of emigrant leaders of the Finnish Communist Party to become masters of Finland's labor affairs. We fight the bureaucratic policies of the Finnish Communist Party because the workers themselves must have the power of decision in their own mass organizations."

Hodgson has noted that the leaders of the new party hoped that they could make a secure place for themselves between the Social Democrats and the Communists, but has commented that they didn't succeed "because the *Suomen Tyomies* group had many big names, but lacked mass support."⁸² They were also thwarted by the rapid rise of the Fascist Lapua movement in 1930. In June the new party suggested a united front among the Social Democrats, official Communists, and themselves to oppose the Lapua movement. However, the Communist Party turned this down, saying that the only united front possible was a united front from below.⁸³ By the end of the year the SAJ trade

union federation had been officially outlawed by the Finnish government under Lapua pressure. The Communists and the new Opposition party were also outlawed. Soon afterwards the Social Democrats established a new labor group, the Finnish Confederation of Trade Unions, in which the Suomen Työmies group participated, while the Communists established the underground Red Trade Union Organization.⁸⁴

With this wave of reaction in late 1930, both the official Communists and Oppositionists were largely destroyed. A. F. Upton has commented that "One may surmise that in normal circumstances, if SKP had held to its line of 1928, the Wallari group had some prospect of displacing the emigre leadership over the workers movement, but the SKP was saved by its own follies, for in the deluge of repression which it brought on itself in 1930 the Wallari group was also swept away." However, Upton has also noted that the SKP (official Communist Party) had made a partially successful counterattack even before the repression by recapturing a party paper, *Tyon Aani* from the dissidents, and had defeated them in several trade union conferences.⁸⁵

Professor Lauri Naataja has noted that after the collapse of the Opposition Party, "A large number of the Oppositionists... joined the Social Democrats during the 1930's. Others remained without a home until after the War, then they joined the Democratic Front, organized by the Communists and left-wing Socialists."⁸⁶

The Danish Communist Opposition

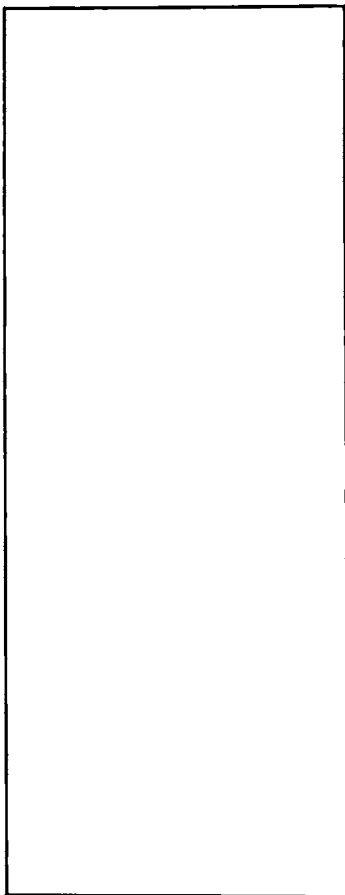
Very little is known about the Communist Opposition in Denmark. We have no indication as to whether their organization developed from a split in the official Communist Party or in some other way. However, it is known that an Opposition Communist Party was established in that country sometime in 1933.⁸⁷ Furthermore, it was reported in mid-1934 that "progress can... be registered for the ICO in... Denmark."⁸⁸ The Danish Communist Opposition was still in existence early in 1938. It was one of the three ICO groups which were individually represented at the Paris Conference of the London Bureau and the International Communist Opposition in February of that year.⁸⁹

The Spanish Communist Opposition—From Bloque Obrero y Campesino to POUM

The most famous party associated with the International Communist Opposition was the Spanish group first called Bloque Obrero y Campesino (BOC—Workers and Peasants Bloc) and later the Partido Obrero de Unificación Marxista (POUM—Workers Party of Marxist Unity). During most of its existence, the BOC was larger and more important in national politics than the official Spanish Communist Party, and BOC leader Joaquín Maurín was the country's outstanding Marxist thinker. During the Spanish Civil War, the BOC's successor, the POUM, became the chief object of persecution of the official Communists, who were anxious to use the war circumstances to obtain absolute power within the Republic. The unequal struggle between the Communist Party and the POUM had a major impact on the thinking not only of Opposition Communists in other countries, but also on non-Stalinist Leftists throughout the world.

Antecedents of the Bloque Obrero y Campesino

At the inception of the Communist Opposition in Spain, the country's labor and political Left were badly divided. From the



beginning of the labor movement, in the latter decades of the nineteenth century, it had been split into two basic groups: anarchosyndicalists and Socialists. The anarchosyndicalists' principal strength lay in Catalonia, but they had great influence also in Valencia and southern Spain. The Socialists' control centered on Madrid, but they had adherents also in the northern and western parts of the country. By the early decades of the twentieth century, this schism had taken organic form. The Unión General de Trabajadores (UGT) united those workers under Socialist influence and was closely allied with the Partido Socialista Obrero Español (PSOE). The Confederación Nacional del Trabajo (CNT) was the major organization of anarchist and syndicalist workers.

After World War I, the Communist Party further divided the Left-labor forces. The party drew its first cadres both from the Socialist-UGT ranks and the CNT. Those Communists who were later to form the Bloque Obrero y Campesino came mainly from the latter group. The Communist Party was marked by factionalism from the beginning. Two different Communist parties first emerged from dissident elements of the Partido Socialista Obrero Español. The Comintern sent Jules Humbert-Droz, its Latin secretary, to Spain to bring these factions into a single party, which he finally succeeded in doing.¹ However, factionalism continued to characterize Spanish Communism.

One group which contributed to formation of the Spanish Communist Party originated in the anarchosyndicalist movement. Joaquín Maurín was one of the delegates to the CNT sent to the Third Congress of the Comintern in 1921. He and the others attended the founding congress of the Red International of Labor Unions (RILU), which met simultaneously with the CI Third Congress to establish a trade union confederation closely allied with the Comintern.

Upon returning to Spain, the CNT delegates were divided concerning whether the CNT should affiliate with the RILU. At least in part due to the jailing of Maurín, who favored joining, the CNT finally decided not to do so, but rather to send delegates to the founding congress of the anarchosyndicalist International Workingmen's Association (IWA), to be held in Berlin in 1922.

Joaquín Maurín disagreed strongly with the position of the majority of the CNT. He was already a figure of some prestige. He had started his adult life as a teacher in the Catalan provincial city of Lérida. During his two years military service he came into contact with Socialist ideas and came to regard himself as a Socialist. He was attracted to the CNT, the dominant labor organization of his region, and started issuing a CNT newspaper in Lérida. Like many others, he was deeply influenced by the Bolshevik Revolution.²

After returning from the Comintern and RILU congresses in Moscow, Maurín led in forming the Comité de Sindicalistas Revolucionarios (Revolutionary Trade Union Committee), composed of CNT members who sup-

ported affiliation with the RILU. The Comité launched a new weekly, *La Batalla*, which put out three hundred copies of its first issue. People associated with the Comité controlled three major CNT unions in Barcelona: Transport Workers, Hotel Workers, and Textile Workers.

Maurín and other dissident CNTers of Catalonia formed a regional federation of the new Communist Party, the Communist Federation of Catalonia and the Balearic Islands (Federación Comunista Catalano-Balear). When the dictatorship of Primo de Rivera suppressed the official newspaper of the CNT, *Solidaridad Obrera*, at the end of 1923, *La Batalla* incorporated in its editorial board the previous editors of the CNT organ, until the CNT leadership forbade their members to participate in *La Batalla*.

Because of its relatively large size, the working-class nature of the Catalan region, and the leadership of Joaquín Maurín, the Catalanian Balearic Federation of the Spanish Communist Party played a major role in the party's affairs during the 1920s. However, it had continuing discrepancies with the national party leadership. Faced with the military dictatorship of General Primo de Rivera, the Madrid leadership of the Communist Party adopted a passive attitude, seeking to maintain the legality of the party. Maurín and his associates objected, and in a plenum in Madrid in November 1923, they forced resignation of the national leadership. A new trio, led by Maurín, took charge of the Communist Party's affairs.

Under Maurín's leadership, the party began to build an underground organization. It issued a new illegal periodical, *Vanguardia*, which attacked the dictatorship with great vigor, and in January 1925 provoked the arrest of most of the top leaders of the party, including Maurín. They were held in jail for almost three years and then were deported to France.

With the arrest of Maurín and other party leaders, Moscow undertook to appoint a new leadership for the Spanish party. A conference was held in Moscow, which decided to entrust the party to José Bullejos, Gabriel León Trilla, and a Catalan, Adame. This new party leadership undertook the task of "bolshevizing" the Spanish party, that is, of wiping out all dissidence and centralizing all power in the national leadership. At the same time, Bullejos, Trilla, and Adame ("the troika") sought to adhere closely to all directives from the Comintern.³

Meanwhile, grave disagreements arose between the Catalan Federation on the one hand and the national party and Comintern on the other. The Maurín group insisted that the party continue energetic underground activities against the dictatorship, while the national leadership and the Comintern favored a more conciliatory policy.⁴ Early in 1927, when Moscow ordered the Spanish party to participate in a consultative assembly Primo de Rivera was about to name as a pseudoparliament, the Maurín group strongly opposed participation. Maurín himself later noted the impact of the Comintern decision upon the Spanish Communists: "The thesis of the C.I. produced perturbation

within the Party. The few members who were left in the face of the errors and the permanent guillotine of the bureaucracy, were abandoning it in the face of such a mistaken policy. The party entered a phase of virtual liquidation."⁵ Even the "troika" finally realized the disastrous nature of the orders from Moscow. They summoned a party conference, attended by a Comintern delegate, which decided not to participate in the consultative assembly. Victor Alba, the historian of the POUM, has commented that "This was the last independent act of the Spanish Communist Party."⁶

The "troika" sought to undermine Maurín and the Catalan leadership. They accused him in Moscow of being a "rightist" and "undisciplined." However, Andrés Nin, the party's permanent representative at Comintern headquarters, came to the defense of the Catalans and published an article in *International Press Correspondence* supporting Maurín and his colleagues.⁷

At the party's Third Congress, held in Paris, the "troika" denied Maurín and Bonet, two of the delegates of the Catalan Federation, their seats on the ground that since they were then resident in France, they were members of the French, not the Spanish, party. This conference saw a new confrontation between the party's Stalinist leadership and the Catalan Federation, which had submitted a thesis on the future development of the revolutionary movement in Spain which, according to Alba "said that the revolution would be democratic, and ended proposing as the slogan in that moment of Dictators: The Federal Democratic Republic." Maurín commented about the conference: "The Thesis of the Catalan Communist Federation was rejected by the C.I. as rightist. In its place there was translated into Spanish the thesis for exportation of the 'democratic dictatorship of the workers and peasants.'" He added that the C.I. "did not understand that we were on the eve of a democratic revolution and that the formula offered would result in a complete divorce between the political aspirations of the great masses of the workers and the Communist Party. To ask the substitution of one dictatorship for another was suicide."⁸

The Third Congress foreshadowed the rupture of the Catalan Federation with the Spanish Communist Party. The break came at a party conference in Bilbao in the following year. Victor Alba cites Maurín as saying that the Catalan Federation did not in fact send any delegates to that conference because it already considered itself separated from the Spanish Party. However, Bullejos wrote many years later that "In 1930 the delegation of the Catalan Federation in the National Conference in Bilbao changed its point of view of the policy of the Central Committee, accepting the latter's general position. This move was repudiated in Barcelona by the Federation, and that organization was separated from the Party by the Central Committee on the suggestion of the delegation from the International."⁹ Victor Alba maintained that the "delegates" from Catalonia had in fact been picked by the Spanish Party leadership.¹⁰

Formation of the Bloque Obrero y Campesino

Once formally expelled from the Spanish Communist Party, the Catalan Communist Federation had to decide upon its future role. As Victor Alba notes, "To enter any of the existing movements was unthinkable. All saw things from the point of view that Maurín considered catastrophic."¹¹

The Catalan Communist Federation had one important tool at its disposal, the weekly newspaper, *La Batalla*, which began to appear again after Joaquín Maurín's return to Barcelona in May 1930. Victor Alba has written that "It is hard for those who didn't live through the period before the civil war to understand the role which the weekly had in the intellectual and political formation of the Catalans—and of the Spaniards in general—and in the work of organization. It was a much profounder role, probably, than that of the daily, in spite of the fact that the latter came out every day and the weekly only each week—or when it could appear."¹² The circulation of most of these weeklies was small, few exceeding a thousand copies per issue. *La Batalla*, however, began with a circulation of three thousand.

Alba has underscored the key political role of the weeklies: "Between the weekly and the reader there was established, in a way, a personal relationship. Exactly because each reader needed his weekly and for that reason helped it in the very frequent periods of shortages of funds, he began to consider the weekly as his own."¹³ When the editor visited a town, he would meet with a group of his readers and would solicit their collaboration with the paper and support for the ideas it presented.

Therefore, with *La Batalla* as its spokesman, the Catalan Communist Federation had a good beginning in its effort to attract adherents. The first necessity was to bring together all those who more or less agreed with the position the federation had assumed. A new party had to be formed. Victor Alba has noted that "at the beginning of 1930, when the dictator fell, there were no more than five hundred members of the Communist Party. A third of them were in the Catalan-Balearic Federation. But there were many more, possibly thousands, of sympathizers with Communism. . . . This sympathy gave the Catalan-Balearic Federation its party. A potential party, it was only necessary to find it, to organize it. This was the immediate task of the Federation."¹⁴

There was one other group in Catalonia with ideas similar to those of the federation, the Partit Comunista Catalá (PCC). It had its origins among young workers and intellectuals led by a schoolteacher from Lérida. Victor Colome, who had broken from the Catalan Communist Federation when the Comintern had ordered the Spanish Communists to enter Primo de Rivera's consultative assembly. They had come to believe that it was no longer possible to change the Communist Party from within. They had also felt that there was need for a specifically Catalan Communist Party which, hopefully, could come to be recognized as a separate member of the Communist International.

They were joined by a few others who had not previously belonged to the Communist Federation. The most outstanding of these new recruits was a young commercial employee, Jordi Arquer.

The Partit Comunista Catalá had been formally launched at a congress which met secretly on November 12, 1928, in a railroad warehouse in Lérida. The secretary general of the new party was Domenec Ramon, a commercial worker. Soon after the founding of the PCC, its Barcelona members got control of an amateur theatrical group, which they used as a front for their activities. The Catalan-language periodical of the theatrical group was rechristened *Treball* (Labor), and it became the slightly-disguised organ of the PCC. By 1930 the PCC had between two hundred and two hundred and fifty members, compared with one hundred and fifty to two hundred in the Catalan Communist Federation.¹⁵ Victor Alba has noted that the PCC felt "morally" a member of the Comintern, and believed that the obstacle to a correct policy was the Spanish Communist Party. It hoped that the International would ultimately recognize the PCC and accept it as an independent member party.¹⁶

There was sentiment within both the Federation and the PCC for merging the two organizations. Many of their leaders were personal friends, and members of the two groups met frequently. However, it took considerable time to reach final agreement on a merger. But in July 1930 Joaquín Maurín and Jordi Arquer of the PCC were both jailed. In prison they agreed upon the need to unify their groups, and soon after they were released the final steps were taken. A clandestine meeting of members of the Federation was held on a beach not far from Barcelona, and it agreed to fusion with the PCC. At about the same time, in October, 1930, the PCC held a congress in which its majority also agreed on unity with the Catalan Federation.

There were elements which did not support unity. Some of these people returned to the Communist Party, including the man in whose name the PCC paper, *Treball*, was legally registered. The result was that during the Civil War, *Treball*, by then a daily, became the official paper of the Stalinist Unified Socialist Party of Catalonia (PSUC—Partido Socialista Unificado de Catalonia), and a most bitter enemy of the former PCC members.

The original date for the unity congress of the federation and the PCC was December 1930. However, various factors forced a postponement, and it finally took place in March 1931, in a bar in the provincial town of Terrassa. It is recounted that the number of delegates was so small that one of them commented that "We are all in the family," then added, "but so were the first Bolsheviks."¹⁷ Victor Alba has noted that "the majority of the participants were young, come to maturity under the Dictatorship, without political or trade union experience, but there was a handful of old CNT militants and early members of the Communist Party."¹⁸

The delegates decided to establish officially two organizations. The first would consist of all existing members of the federation and the PCC, and

would continue to be called *Federación Comunista Catalano-Balear*. However, at its second congress a year later, this organization was rechristened *Federación Comunista iberica*, thus reflecting the party's aspirations to become a Spanish rather than just a Catalan organization.

The second organization established by the Terrassa convention was the *Bloque Obrero y Campesino* (BOC—Workers and Peasants Bloc). This was supposed to be a mass organization, whose members would join the federation "once prepared and educated politically."¹⁹ Bertram Wolfe, the United States Communist Opposition leader, commented in 1932 that the bloque was "a sort of permanent united front," open only to Communist sympathizers.²⁰ However, Victor Alba has noted that this apparent difference between federation and bloque tended to disappear in practice.

In its organizational structure the new federation-bloque plainly followed the Communist tradition. According to Victor Alba, "The model is the typical organization of Communist parties: cells of five members at the base, neighborhood committees named by the cells, local committees named by the neighborhood groups, and a Central Committee elected by the Congress, with the ability to designate an Executive Committee from among its members."²¹ However, Alba has noted that "What distinguished the Bloque from the Communist parties is that the system functioned in fact and not only on paper. The Bloque received subsidies from no one, was sustained by the dues of its members, and in the cells the theses for congresses were really discussed, as well as the resolutions of the Central Committee—which met regularly—and the decisions of the Executive Committee. The congresses were composed of delegates really elected by the rank and file. Democratic centralism, which functioned among the Bolsheviks under Lenin, but then ceased, became a reality in the Bloque."²²

The Terrassa congress elected the party's first central committee, which in turn named an executive committee, with equal numbers from the federation and the PCC. The first members of the executive committee were Joaquín Maurín, secretary general, and David Rey, Pere Bonet, Miguel Ferrer, Jordi Arquer, and Victor Colome.

The new party started with about seven hundred members. Victor Alba has noted: "These seven hundred members were activists and all were known in their places of work, in their unions, atheneum, village or neighborhood. All had participated . . . against the Dictatorship."²³

Ideological Position of the Federation-BOC

The ideological position of the new party was very different from that of the then current Third Period line of the Third International. Victor Alba has summed up its position: "Spain needs a democratic-bourgeois revolution which must be carried out by the working class, since the bourgeoisie has demonstrated itself incapable of doing so. Thus the way would be opened for

the Socialist revolution. This revolution must be carried forward with complete international independence, without submission to any political line not determined by the workers of the Peninsula." Alba added that "This marked the international position of the new party. It would not be affiliated with the existing Internationals and would defend the Russian revolution without thereby abandoning the right and duty of criticizing what it considered the errors of its leaders." Finally, "it would oppose colonialism and imperialism, and it would support the movements of national emancipation and colonial rebellion."²⁴

As a group with its principal support in Catalonia, the federation naturally took a position on the issue of Catalan separatism. The party program said: "The Communists of Catalonia do not forget the double slavery which we suffer, as workers submitted to a bourgeoisie and as Catalans dominated by a foreign power." It stated that it "demands the right of Catalonia, the right of all the Iberic nationalities, to free determination of their own destiny, including separation," and added that "the Communists of Catalonia advocate the organization of all the Iberic nations into a federation of states grouped on the basis of mutual recognition of complete internal freedom. . . . Our demand is, insofar as the nationalist question is concerned: Union of Iberian Republics."²⁵

The ideological position of the Federation-BOC was not exactly the orthodox one taken by affiliates of the International Communist Opposition. However, it did reflect several basic ideas of the ICO: the right of each national Communist party to run itself and to adapt basic Communist ideas to the particular situation of its own country; and loyalty to the Soviet Union, although a more critical loyalty than that of most of the other ICO affiliates in 1931.

Early Actions of the Bloque

One of the first activities of the new party was to participate in the municipal elections of April 1931, which were to result in the downfall of the Spanish monarchy. It was invited to join a coalition organized by the left-wing Catalan Autonomist party, *Esquerra Catalá*, and the newly formed *Unió Socialista de Catalunya*. However, the bloque rejected this invitation because of its need to establish its own identity among the Catalan workers. It ran candidates of its own in all wards of Barcelona and in most of those of Lérida, plus in a few other municipalities. Eleven bloque candidates for municipal councillor were elected in various cities of Catalonia, although none was successful in Barcelona.²⁶ There the bloque got only 2,176 votes.²⁷

In June 1931, after the fall of the monarchy, the bloque took part in the campaign for the constitutional assembly. It received 17,536 votes in Catalonia, although it did not elect any deputies. On October 4, 1931, Maurín was a

candidate in a by-election for deputy. Voting took place on two successive Sundays. On the first day Maurín received 8,326 votes (the official Communist candidate getting 1,264). In the runoff election Maurín received 13,702 votes, compared to 42,000 for the victorious Catalan nationalist candidate.²⁸

Jules Humbert-Droz, who was part of a Comintern delegation seeking to reorganize the Spanish Communist Party, was impressed with the activity of the Maurín group just before and after unification of the federation and PCC. On February 25, 1931, he wrote to Manuisky of the Comintern that it had published two issues of *La Batalla* and was carrying on an intensive campaign against the official party. He added that *La Batalla* had published articles by Stalin and "seems to want to avoid alliance with the Trotskyites." Finally, he noted that "The Maurinists are very active and are creating many difficulties for our party."²⁹ On April 10, Humbert-Droz again reported to Manuisky that "In Catalonia there is under way a campaign of extreme violence against that party and this has consolidated their ranks [the bloque] in spite of contrary claims of our comrades." He added that "The elements whom we thought we had reconquered two months ago, are candidates of the Bloc Obrero y Campesino of Maurín, so that I don't believe the claims of our comrades who talk every day about the rapid disintegration of the party of Maurín."³⁰

With the fall of King Alfonso, XIII, Colonel Franciso Macía, leader of the Esquerra Catala' party, proclaimed the existence of the Catalan Republic on April 13, 1931. Shortly afterwards, the bloque sent a delegation of armed members to the seat of the new Catalan Republican government. It was reported that "They installed themselves as a guard. They feared a reaction by the police or the army, and weren't convinced that the Esquerra would be willing to fight."³¹

The intense activity of the bloque paid off quickly. Within two months of proclamation of the Republic, its membership had doubled to between thirteen and fourteen hundred. The circulation of *La Batalla* rose from three thousand to thirty thousand and subsequently levelled off at about seven thousand.³²

Nature of Bloque Organization and Activity

Victor Alba has observed that "perhaps 90 percent of the members were workers—with a high percentage of white collar workers, but not a majority." He has argued that the bloque was different from other radical and labor groups of the time: "For its members, the Bloque had a special characteristic: it was necessary . . . for the 'bloquista' the Bloque was an extension of his home, and to work for the Bloque was more important than the work by which he earned his living. . . . To be a member of the Bloque was converted into a way of life."³³ The Bloque did not tend to attract those primarily motivated by ambition. Alba has noted that "It had positions which were not

easy: Communist, but outside of the Communist International; revolutionary and working-class, but defending at that moment the need for a bourgeois democratic revolution; part of the republic, but trying to prevent people from having illusions about it; Marxist, and therefore opposed to anarchism, but working inside the CNT; internationalist, but defending the rights of the nationalities and of self-determination." Therefore, Alba concluded, "To adhere to the Bloque it was necessary not to be ambitious and to have certain political subtlety."³⁴

The bloque had various subsidiary organizations. These included: The Red Aid, to help political prisoners and people being persecuted; the Electoral Secretariat, to train members for poll watching and related activities; a feminine section, designed to develop activities which would particularly appeal to women who, however, were not organized separately within the bloque; and a proletarian theater, which Victor Alba has said was "mediocre," and with which Salvador Dali was associated for a short time.³⁵

Two other subsidiaries of the BOC were also important. One was its defense section, the main function of which was to protect members while they put up posters and to protect meetings from attack, particularly by Stalinists. The other was the youth group, organized at the end of 1931, for young people up to the age of twenty-one. It was particularly active among the students and as a result was predominantly middle class.

One particular center of activity of the bloque was the "ateneo," a typical institution of pre-Civil War Catalonia, and part of the heritage of anarchosyndicalism so characteristic of the labor movement of that region. The typical ateneo was a working-class cultural center where classes were given, lectures and debates were held, libraries were available. They were vital centers of working-class life, politics and trade union activity.

During the early 1930s there were many ateneos in Barcelona and provincial Catalan cities. Quite early the BOC won control of the Ateneo Enciclopédico Popular, one of the most important in Barcelona. Victor Alba has noted that after bloque members won control of it, its work "was not a sectarian activity, but it was evident that the mere fact that its work was organized by bloquistas favored the Bloque."³⁶ The bloque also won influence in other ateneos in working-class sections of Barcelona as well as in interior cities.

Another important activity of the BOC before the Civil War was publication of various periodicals. In Barcelona it published *La Batalla* and *L'Hora*, both weeklies. There were also publications aligned with the bloque in smaller cities of Catalonia, including *L'Espurna* in Gerona, *Avant* in Lérida, *Front* in Sitges, and periodicals called *Avante* in both Balaguer and Figueras.³⁷

Finally, the Bloque participated regularly in election campaigns. In the November 1932 Catalan parliament elections, it received 3,565 votes in Barcelona and twelve thousand throughout Catalonia, compared with thirty-seven thousand votes received by the right-wing Lliga in Catalonia, and the

sixty-five thousand received by the Esquerra Catalá in Barcelona alone. The official Communists got only 1,216 votes in the entire region.³⁸

In the Spanish parliamentary election of November 1933, which resulted in a Right victory, the bloque formed a coalition with the Catalan Federation of the Spanish Socialist Party (PSOE), under the name *Front Obrer* (Workers Front). This ticket received 5,745 votes in Barcelona, 2,758 in the province of Barcelona, 8,103 in Gerona, 1,921 in Tarragona, and 5,521 in Lérida, for 24,048 in all Catalonia.³⁹

Relations with Official Communists

Although the bloque was clearly a dissident Communist movement, the official party and the Comintern did not for some time entirely give up hope of winning back its members—including Joaquín Maurín. The fact was that the official party had virtually no members in Catalonia. The first attempt to win back the bloque was taken by Jules Humbert-Droz. He has noted that "In Barcelona I reestablished contact with the dissident party of the Maurín, where there were several comrades in whom I had confidence. But my efforts, supported by the delegation, were not sufficient to reestablish unity."⁴⁰

Subsequently, the Political Bureau of the Spanish Party issued an invitation to members of the bloque to return. This aroused opposition by Bullejos, and so Humbert-Droz suggested that Maurín and others go to Moscow to discuss the matter. Maurín refused, fearing that once he was in Moscow the Comintern would prevent his return, thus decapitating the Communist Opposition in Spain.⁴¹

The final maneuver was an attempt by the official party to appeal over Maurín's head to members of his party. *Mundo Obrero*, the official party's weekly, published an invitation to bloque members in June 1931 which, while denouncing Maurín, noted that "The Central Committee of the Communist Party . . . issues you a warm call to return to our ranks, and declares that it is disposed to admit you *en bloc* on the basis of acceptance without reservations of the program and the political line of the Communist International and its Spanish Section."⁴² Needless to say, virtually no one accepted this invitation.

In March 1932 the Fifth Congress of the official party decided to establish a Communist Party of Catalonia, which would, in name at least, be directly affiliated to the Comintern. This group was set up in May 1932 with Ramón Casanellas, who had recently returned home after living in Moscow since 1921, as its secretary general. It almost immediately issued a pamphlet "The Renegades of Communism: The Bloque Obrero y Campesino of Maurín."⁴³

Trade Union Activities of the Bloque

The most important field of activity of the bloque was organized labor. A major disagreement of the Spanish Opposition with the official party and the

Comintern was the Stalinists' insistence on setting up a separate Communist-controlled labor movement. The bloque sought, not entirely successfully, to work within the established union organizations.

The labor movement of Spain in the early 1930s was split between the Unión General de Trabajadores (UGT), closely linked to the Socialist Party, and the anarchosyndicalist Confederación Nacional de Trabajo. The CNT was overwhelmingly dominant in Catalonia, and since the bloque was largely confined to that region, it was the CNT within which the Maurinistas worked.

The situation within the CNT at the time of the advent of the Spanish Republic and the autonomous government of Catalonia was somewhat complicated. There were two major tendencies within the CNT, and the bloque's followers came to constitute a third one. Dominant were the "sindicalistas," led by Angel Pestaña. Although revolutionaries, they were first and foremost trade unionists and fought against use of the CNT for *putschist* political adventures. During the later years of the dictatorship, they had been in tacit alliance with the Spanish Republican parties and the Esquerra Catalá. However, with the resurgence of trade union militancy after the fall of the monarchy, and with rather rapid disillusionment in the Republic among many CNT workers, Pestaña lost control to the pure anarchists, led by a semisecret organization, the Federación Anarquista Iberica (FAI), founded during the Primo de Rivera period to bring anarchist "purity" to the CNT. The FAI led the CNT into several revolutionary general strikes and attempted uprisings in the years preceding the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War.⁴⁴

The FAI largely dominated the CNT after 1932. The sindicalistas were a distinct minority. The CNT faction organized by the Bloque Obrero y Campesino, the so-called Oposición Sindicalista Revolucionaria, was even smaller. It controlled a few unions in Barcelona, including the printers and commercial employees; but its major strength was outside of the Catalan capital. It controlled many unions in Gerona and Tarragona and almost all those in Lérida.⁴⁵

There was a three-way split in the CNT in 1932. With the victory of the FAI, the sindicalistas issued the Manifiesto of the Thirty (from which they became known as the "Treintistas"), protesting against FAI control, and withdrawing the unions under their influence from the CNT. They regrouped as the Sindicatos de Oposición de la CNT (Opposition Unions of the CNT).⁴⁶

The turn of the bloque-controlled unions came next. The FAI pushed through the CNT the rule that no one could hold union office who had ever been a candidate of a political party. Those unions which refused to remove leaders who had been candidates—almost exclusively of the bloque—were expelled from the CNT. Those thrown out included a handful in Barcelona and most of those of Gerona, Tarragona, and Lérida. They then established the Sindicatos Expulsados de la CNT (Expelled Unions of the CNT).⁴⁷

The BOC gained influence particularly among the public utility employees

and white-collar workers. The CNT had paid relatively little attention to these groups, and it offered little resistance when the bloque began to carry on extensive organizing activities. Among the public utility workers, the bloque organized the Frente Unido de Luz y Fuerza (United Front of Light and Power), which in October 1933 succeeded in negotiating a collective agreement which provided for the forty-four hour week, sick pay, and other benefits.

Among the white-collar workers, the major force was the Sindicato Mer-BOC-controlled unions but did not join the Sindicatos Expulsados de la CNT. In the early months of 1933 it undertook a series of meetings with other white-collar unions, including the Centro Autonomista de Dependents del Comerc i de la Industria (CADCI), until then mainly a mutual benefit organization rather than a union. In September 1933 the Commercial Workers United Front was formed by the Sindicato Mercantil, CADCI, various autonomous unions, the gas and electricity unions, food workers and several others. Some eighty thousand workers belonged to these organizations.

The Frente Unico Mercantil called a strike on November 14. Offices were closed and virtually all commercial enterprises in Barcelona except food stores were shut. The strike was successful when the minister of labor of the Catalan government rendered an arbitration decision granting most of the workers' demands. Employers tried to take advantage of the right-wing electoral victory (three days after the end of the strike) by appealing the Catalan minister's award to the Tribunal of Constitutional Guarantees in Madrid. After a further show of militancy by the workers, the employers finally withdrew their appeal.⁴⁸

The bloque also carried on a campaign to organize the unemployed. Josep Coll, an out-of-work mason, and Andreu Sabadell, an unemployed water-works employee were in charge. They succeeded in establishing the Frente Obrero contra el Paro Forzoso (Workers Front Against Unemployment), led by members of the bloque. In February 1933 the bloque sponsored a conference on unemployment attended by delegates from the BOC, the Unió Socialista de Catalunya, several autonomous unions and the Expelled Unions of the CNT. Largely due to the efforts of the Frente Obrero contra el Paro Forzoso, the Catalan Parliament passed a law in April 1933 establishing the Institute Against Unemployment, which received an appropriation of some 85.7 million pesetas in its first year of operation.⁴⁹

The BOC was also active in trying to organize the peasants. Except for the vineyard sharecroppers, who had a powerful organization, the Unió de Rabassaires, allied with the Esquerra Catalá, the rural workers were poorly organized. The bloque succeeded in establishing two groups, the Unió Agraria in the Lérida region, and Acció Social Agraria in the vicinity of Gerona.

Victor Alba has noted 1934 the Lérida group had almost as many members in that region as the Unión de Rabassaires, that is, eighteen thousand; and in Gerona, Acció Social Agraria had around twelve thousand members.⁵⁰

Second Congress of the Bloque

The Second Congress of the Federation-Bloque took place in April 1932 in Barcelona. For two months draft resolutions for this congress had been published and discussed in *La Batalla*. The four principal resolutions passed at the congress dealt with regional autonomy within Spain, the international situation, general political questions, and the issue of Communist unity. The first of these resolutions contained a historical discussion of the different "nations" within the Spanish state, surveyed the attitudes of various Left and labor groups, and declared that the Federation-Bloque "puts in its program of class struggle the principle of liberty of the oppressed nations by the Spanish State," but expressed opposition to workers belonging to strictly "nationalist" organizations which ignored the class struggle.⁵¹ The resolution on international affairs dealt particularly with Germany, where, it declared "through the breach opened between German Socialists and Communists, fascism is entering." It also called for independence for Spanish Morocco.

The general political thesis restated the bloque's belief in the need for a democratic bourgeois revolution carried out by the workers as the first step towards a socialist revolution. It also stated once again the basic issue separating the bloque from the official Communists, declaring that "Communism, although naturally accepting the fundamental principles of Marxism and of Leninism, will not be able to win the leadership of the working class unless it is the direct fruit of the Iberian historic reality, and not a standardized model subject to bureaucratic direction completely extraneous to our revolution. The Spanish revolution has to be made by the Spanish workers. Revolutionary colonialism is disastrous for the march of the revolution."⁵²

Finally, the resolution on Communist unity stated as a fundamental requirement acceptance of democracy (however limited): "Communism, because it tends towards an authentic democracy with all class vestiges removed, must conserve and treasure as something precious the elements of democracy acquired historically in the class struggle, and not refuse the benefits of democracy to any except those who . . . try to deprive the proletariat of it."⁵³

The congress also elected a new central committee, which then chose a new executive committee. Victor Alba has given two different versions of the new executive committee. In the Spanish edition of his study of the BOC, he listed its members as being Maurín, Arquer, Riviera, Pere Bonet, Colome, David Rey and Miguel Ferrer.⁵⁴ In the Catalan edition he added Josep Coll, Eusebi Rodríguez Salas Enric Adroher, and Jaime Miravittles to this list.⁵⁵

The BOC and the Alianza Obrera

The bloque, drawing a lesson for Spain from the role of the split in the labor and radical movements of Germany in bringing Hitler to power, began to urge unification of all labor and left-wing forces in Spain. The first group to be receptive to the idea was the autonomous Socialist group of Catalonia, the *Unió Socialista de Catalunya* (USC), which proposed that the USC and bloque merge. The bloque rejected this, in view of the alliance of the USC with the *Esquerra Catalá*, which controlled the Catalan regional government.

However, the bloque continued efforts to unite the Left in Catalonia and throughout Spain. Its efforts bore fruit in November 1933, in a conference of the Labor United Front of Catalonia. This meeting laid the basis for the *Alianza Obrera* (Workers Alliance), which was established in December 1933. It was formed by representatives of the CNT Opposition Unions, the *Federación Sindicalista Libertaria*, the Expelled Unions of the CNT, the Catalan UGT, the *Partido Sindicalista* (recently established by Angel Pestaña), the Catalan Federation of the Spanish Socialist Party, the bloque, the *Unió Socialista de Catalunya*, the Trotskyite *Izquierda Comunista*, and the *Unió de Rabassaires*.⁵⁶

The *Alianza Obrera* had its baptism of fire three months later: a one-day general strike throughout Catalonia, in support of a similar walkout of UGT unions of Madrid in response to an employers' offensive against the labor movement there. Although the walkout had relatively little success in Barcelona, where the orthodox CNT's strength was concentrated, it was virtually universal in the rest of Catalonia.

As a result of this show of force, the *Alianza Obrera* idea began to spread outside of Catalonia. Similar groups were established in Castellón and Valencia soon after the Catalan walkout. In the Asturias region, even the local CNT joined the *Alianza*. Within a few weeks there were *Alianzas Obreras* also in Jaen, Cordoba, Sevilla and Madrid. A major step forward for the *Alianza Obrera* concept was the endorsement in July by both the UGT and the Socialist Party of the idea of local *Alianzas*. Victor Alba has explained the reason for the spread of the Workers Alliance idea:

It began to be seen that the *Alianza* was a new type of organization, which not only united but multiplied the force of its components, but without demanding that its affiliated organizations make concessions or abandon principles. It was seen that the *Alianza* could win strikes which without it would be lost, and it began to be believed that when the moment came, it could lead to victory. Because it must not be forgotten that, in spite of the electoral triumph of the Right, the workers maintained their offensive spirit.⁵⁷

The official Communists were at first strongly opposed to the *Alianza*. One party leader, Francisco Galán, summed up his party's position by saying that

"If I had to sit at the same table with the Socialist leaders, I would blush like a virgin among prostitutes." The official CP showed its disdain for labor unity by officially launching in April 1934 its own tiny trade union group, the Confederación General de Trabajadores Unidos.⁵⁸ However, because of the shift in the Comintern's line, the Spanish Communists soon reversed their position. At a plenum on September 11 and 12, 1934, they decided to enter the Alianzas Obreras.⁵⁹ However, even then they sent a delegation to Largo Caballero, head of the UGT, to try to convince him to give a different name to the Alianzas, as Largo Caballero himself said, a name "more in harmony with the Russian vocabulary."⁶⁰

The first Catalan Conference of Workers Alliances met on June 17, 1934. The bloque introduced a resolution saying that if the right-wing Spanish government attacked the autonomy of Catalonia, the Workers Alliances would take control of defense of the region and proclaim the Federal Socialist Republic. When the majority rejected this motion, the bloque introduced and supported a resolution which said: "If the counter-revolutionary government of Madrid attacks Catalonia, and as a result the Catalan republic is proclaimed here, the Alianza Obrera will support the movement, seeking to take control of it with the purpose of leading it towards the triumph of the federal socialist republic."⁶¹

The Bloque, the Alianza, and Events of October 1934

The culmination of the Alianza Obrera movement was the frustrated insurrection of October 1934. The principal centers of the rebellion were Catalonia and the Asturias region, where the Alianzas Obreras had their principal centers of strength. The immediate cause of the October 1934 events was entry into the government of the most powerful element of the Spanish Right, the Confederación Española de Derechas Autonomas (CEDA), headed by José María Gil Robles, on October 4, when Gil Robles was named minister of war in a new cabinet headed by Alejandro Lerroux.

The Alianzas Obreras throughout Spain, with support of the Socialist Party and the Unión General de Trabajadores, but without that of the CNT, reacted to installation of the Lerroux-Gil Robles government by calling a national general strike for Saturday, October 6. Throughout most of Spain the movement was limited to an almost unanimous walkout. In Catalonia and Asturias it became a revolution.

The situation in Catalonia was very confused. The Alianza Obrera dominated the labor movement outside Barcelona, and in the early hours of October 6, the Alianza seized control of most of the interior towns and cities. In some places it proclaimed the Catalan Republic, in others the Catalan Socialist Republic. In some places even local units of the CNT participated.⁶²

However, the situation was different in Barcelona, where the CNT leadership did not support the general strike, even though the masses of CNT members

participated in it. The middle-class Catalan Nationalists who controlled the regional government were very hesitant about taking any revolutionary steps without CNT backing, even though the Esquerra party had at its disposal not only the police of the capital, but also a party militia of the extreme Nationalist group, *Estat Catalá*, popularly known as the "escamots," or action groups, led by Josep Dencas. Although in previous months the escamots had had many clashes with CNT unions and had broken some CNT strikes, they agreed with the CNT on October 6, 1934, and opposed any precipitous action. Although they had twelve thousand men armed with rifles and other weapons, they did not move out of their headquarters all day. For its part the CNT leadership's only action was to order their followers back to work once the revolutionary movement had collapsed.

It was the *Alianza Obrera* which worked to convert the general strike into an armed uprising. To this end they sought two things: that President *Luis Companys* proclaim the Catalan Republic, and that he and the escamots provide arms for the workers with which to defend that republic. Several times on October 6 the leaders of the *Alianza* met with President *Companys*, urging that he proclaim the separatist republic and arm the workers. In late afternoon they organized a march of workers past the headquarters of the regional government. Finally, at eight o'clock in the evening, from the balcony of the *Generalidad*, the Catalan government headquarters, *Luis Companys* proclaimed "The Catalan State within the Spanish Federal Republic."⁶³

However, President *Companys* was satisfied with the mere gesture of proclaiming the Catalan state. He took no moves to defend it. Neither his government nor the escamots made arms available to the workers already in the streets and willing to fight for the new Catalan regime as part of the wider revolutionary movement throughout Spain. Only an hour after proclamation of the new Catalan state, General *Domenec Batet* (who was to be shot by the rebels at the beginning of the Civil War in July 1936) ordered army troops out of the barracks, and by 10 P.M. they were in front of the *Generalidad*. Cannons were turned on the building. At 6:30 P.M. on the morning of October 7, President *Companys* and his government surrendered to *Batet*.

Victor Alba has noted that in Catalonia "the surrender came without a defeat. The escamots, the *Alianza*, arms, and many people were available for action. All Catalonia was in the power of the *Alianza* or of the *Esquerra*. In the towns near Barcelona workers and rabassaires had begun to mobilize, ready to intervene without waiting further orders which never came."⁶⁴ *Alba* has argued that it was "fear of the workers not of the army" which brought about capitulation of the Catalan government. He added that "Possibly the *Alianza* would not have been strong enough to take over the leadership of the struggle if it had really begun. But *Companys* did not wish to risk it."⁶⁵

John Brademas, in his study of the CNT, largely agreed with *Alba*. He noted that "in spite of its initial success, the Barcelona movement failed because the *Esquerra* was not interested in social revolutions, and its military arm was pure

and simply fascist as well as separatist; because the CNT stood aside; because the coalition in charge of the Generalidad ignored its own proletarian base, the Alianza Obrera, refusing it the arms for 10,000 men which it possessed."⁶⁶

The situation was substantially different in the Asturias region. There as Victor Alba has noted, "The Alianza Obrera did not have to await the collaboration of the Republicans. It did not fear the revolution. It fought for two weeks, and the government had to use the forces of the Tercio (Foreign Legion) to put down the uprising of the miners." He noted that the bloque had only a small number of members in the Asturian region, but that "they occupied posts of responsibility in the local committees that organized local life during the time that the workers dominated Asturias."⁶⁷

The essential difference between Catalonia and Asturias, of course, was that organized labor was split in the former case and completely united in the latter. The CNT, although a distinct minority in Asturian labor, belonged to the Alianza and cooperated fully with the insurrection. This was of key importance since most industrial workers in the region belonged to the CNT, while miners and other organized workers were in the UGT.⁶⁸ Victor Alba felt that the experience in Asturias confirmed the correctness of the bloque's advocacy of the Alianza Obrera. If the Alianza had not been established in Catalonia under BOC leadership, it would not have arisen elsewhere. He noted the importance of the Asturian uprising of 1934 in foreshadowing what would happen with the outbreak of the Civil War less than two years later: "The militia, the collectivizations and the committees which appeared at the beginning of the Civil War were found in embryo in the Asturian experience of 1934."⁶⁹

In Valencia, the BOC, local units of the Socialist Party and the UGT, the official Communists, and some elements of the CNT all participated in the movement of October. The general strike in Valencia was virtually unanimous and the Alianza Obrera there resolved to convert the general strike into a revolutionary movement on the morning of October 7. The local CNT port workers' leader was to take over an army barracks where there were many sympathizers with the movement; Molina Conejero of the UGT-PSOE was to seize the headquarters of the provincial government; and Julián Gorkin was to raise the red flag from the balcony of the city hall to proclaim the Social Republic, before a crowd which would be massed for the purpose. However, all these plans came to naught with the surrender of the Catalan government, making the struggle in Valencia appear hopeless.⁷⁰

Moves to Expand the Bloque

After failure of the October 1934 insurrection, one of the bloque's major objectives was conversion of the Alianzas Obreras into a national organization. However, because of constant blows of the rightist government against left-wing parties and the labor movement, and in part, too, as a result of growth of

the Popular Front movement elsewhere in Europe, the Popular Front, by the end of 1935, took the place of the *Alianza Obrera*, despite the wishes of Joaquín Maurín and his fellows.

In pursuing its second objective, that of forming a broader party of revolutionary Marxists, the bloque faced two possible alternatives; to enter the Socialist Party (PSOE), which was already split into several factions, and where the bloque people might have had considerable influence; or to unite with a number of other relatively small groups in Catalonia and form a party which might at least be a significant bidder for power in that part of Spain. Each of these alternatives was explored.

There were elements within the PSOE in late 1934 and much of 1935 who were anxious to see the bloque enter that party. Principal among these were Santiago Carrillo, then secretary of the Socialist Youth, who wrote Maurín in August 1935 urging the bloque to enter the Socialist Party to help the left wing, led by Largo Caballero. At the same time the Catalan branch of the PSOE issued a formal invitation to the bloque to enter the Socialist Party, promising that they would be given representation in the national leadership of the PSOE.⁷¹ Largo Caballero also favored the idea.⁷²

However, Maurín rejected this, saying that even with the bloque group in the PSOE, the right-center was likely to win out, and by then former bloque people would be hamstrung in their search for revolutionary Socialist unity. For him the important thing was "not that we Communists unite with Besteiro and Prieto [leaders of the Right and the Center of the Socialist Party], but that the Communists and Left Socialists meet and work together, which is not precisely the same thing."⁷³

Maurín's position did not get unanimous support from the bloque leadership. Julián Gorkin, perhaps the second most prestigious figure in the BOC at the time, favored entry into the Socialist Party. He felt that as the strongest labor political group in Catalonia, and of perhaps equal importance with the Socialists in the Valencia region, the bloque could be an important factor in preventing left-wing Socialists from being infiltrated and taken over by the official Communists.⁷⁴ However, the bloque overwhelmingly rejected entry into the PSOE.⁷⁵

The irony of this was that many of those Socialists who were so anxious in 1935 to have the Opposition Communists come into their own party ended up as Stalinists. Santiago Carrillo led the Socialist Youth into unification with the Communist Youth to form the *Juventud Socialista Unificada*, which joined the Young Communist International. As this is being written (1979) he is secretary general of the Communist Party of Spain. The Catalan branch of the PSOE merged with the Catalan Communists and several other groups to form the *Partido Socialista Unificado de Catalonia*, member of the Comintern, which during the Civil War became the most violent persecutor of the Opposition Communists.

In March 1935 there were unity discussions in Catalonia involving the bloque, Izquierda Comunista of Andrés Nin, Unió Socialista de Catalunya (USC), the official Catalan Communist Party, the Catalan Federation of the PSOE, and the Partit Català Proletari, a working-class Catalan Nationalist group. However, it soon became clear that it would not be possible to bring all of these into a single organization. The bloque and Izquierda Comunista were both opposed to the close association of the Unió Socialista with the middle-class Esquerra Català, an alliance the USC was not willing to give up. Also, the official Communists threw roadblocks in the way of unity, announcing that they would not unite with the "renegades" of the bloque and the "traitors" of Izquierda Comunista.⁷⁶

Andrés Nin and the Izquierda Comunista

The only group with which the bloque clearly had enough in common to permit merger was Izquierda Comunista, a small faction led by Andrés Nin, an early leader of the Spanish Communist Party, and a long-time personal friend of Joaquín Maurín. While in Moscow, working for the Red International of Labor Unions, Nin had been an ally of Maurín and the Catalan and Balearic Federation of the Communist Party. However, when he returned to Spain in September 1930, he did not join it.

Although having for a while supported Bukharin, Nin, before returning home, had become a follower of Trotsky with whom he maintained contact in exile.⁷⁷ He was "in a quandary" about the BOC, because "he wanted to enter the party which was being formed and knew that it would have some importance, but at the same time, out of loyalty to Trotsky, he knew that he would have to enter it to conquer the new party and convert it to Trotskyism."⁷⁸

The Catalan Communist Federation had its own reservations about Nin, which had some justification in Nin's correspondence with Trotsky. Nin wrote that "It is necessary to enter the Federation to carry on systematic work and create a faction."⁷⁹ Meanwhile, he had taken over leadership of the tiny Spanish Trotskyite group, the "Spanish Section of the Communist Opposition." Under his direction, the Trotskyites began to issue a periodical, *Comunismo*.

Although Nin and the Spanish Trotskyites were critical of the Maurín group, they continued to have some contact with it until, in September 1932, Trotsky ordered that they break all relations. Trotsky was becoming generally unhappy with his Spanish followers. In December 1933 he criticized them publicly and wrote of "the danger and falsehood of the policy of Comrade Nin." The final break came in September 1934. An editorial in *Comunismo* reported that "the Spanish Opposition had broken with the international Trotskyist organization because they refused to accept the new tactic, established by Trotsky, to enter the Socialist parties . . ." to try to take them over.⁸⁰

By this time the Spanish Trotskyites had changed their name to *Izquierda Comunista*. They had no more than a dozen members in Catalonia, but had a hundred in Madrid, and perhaps five hundred in the Asturian and Basque areas and scattered members in Galicia and elsewhere.⁸¹

Formation of the POUM

The possibility of unifying the bloque and *Izquierda Comunista* first arose in conversations between Maurín and Nin at meetings of the Catalan *Alianza Obrera*. However, there was opposition in both groups to such a union. Some members of *Izquierda Comunista* preferred to enter the PSOE, while there were those in the bloque who feared that the *Izquierda*, which until a few months before had been the Spanish Trotskyite group, by joining the BOC was following the "French turn" ordered by Trotsky. Three members of the bloque leadership, Miguel Ferrer, Eusebi Rodríguez Salas, and Colome, withdrew from the bloque in protest against the merger; in 1936 all became members of the Stalinist PSUC.⁸²

Unification of the bloque and *Izquierda Comunista* would be a somewhat one-sided affair. The bloque had several thousand members, some influence in Catalan organized labor, and enough electoral strength at least to elect municipal councillors. *Izquierda Comunista* had at most a few hundred members and no trade union following. Obviously, *Izquierda Comunista* had considerable to gain by joining a much larger group. However, what advantages unification might have for the bloque were less clear. But Victor Alba has noted that *Izquierda Comunista* would bring "various distinguished members, who would be good theoreticians, and some nuclei which could aid the expansion of the Bloque in the rest of Spain."⁸³

Final steps towards unity of the two groups consisted of a clandestine congress of the bloque, "a consultation by letter of members of the *Izquierda Comunista*, both of which were favorable to merger, and finally a clandestine congress at Los Planes, near Barcelona on September 29, 1935.⁸⁴ The new party was christened *Partido Obrero de Unificación Marxista* (POUM—Workers Party of Marxist Unity). Its founding congress adopted various resolutions and elected a new central committee which chose an executive committee: Joaquín Maurín as secretary general, Pere Bonet, Jordi Arquer, Joseph Coll, Josep Rovira, all of the bloque; and Andrés Nin, Narcís Molins i Fabrega, Enric Gironella, and Tomás Tusó from *Izquierda Comunista*.⁸⁵

Victor Alba has claimed that "In the POUM were almost all of the founders of the official Communist Party."⁸⁶ At its inception it had some seven thousand members. It controlled unions in Catalonia which claimed sixty thousand members, compared with 1,440,474 in the UGT and 1,577,537 in the CNT. The Socialist Party was said to have about one hundred thousand members.⁸⁷

The POUM was a Marxist-Leninist party. Its fundamental positions were stated in a pamphlet issued shortly after its formation:

First. The Spanish Revolution is a revolution of the democratic-socialist type.

Second. Once power is taken, transitory establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat. The organs of Power will be the Alianzas Obreras. The dictatorship of the proletariat presupposes the most ample and complete workers democracy. The Party of the revolution cannot and should not strangle working-class democratization.

Third. The need for the Alianza Obrera locally and nationally. The Alianza Obrera must necessarily pass through three phases: organ of United Front... organ of insurrection... organ of Power.

Fourth. Recognition of the problems of the nationalities. Spain will be structured as the Iberic Union of Socialist Republics.

Fifth. Democratic solution, in its first phase, of the problem of land. The land for him who works it.

Sixth. In the face of war, transformation of imperialist war into civil war.

Seventh. The United Party will remain outside of the II and III Internationals, both failures, struggling for world revolutionary socialist unity on new bases.

Eighth. Defense of the U.S.S.R. but not favoring its policy of pacts with capitalist States, but support of international revolutionary action of the working class. Right to criticize policy of the leaders of the U.S.S.R. which work against progress of the world revolution.

Sixth. Permanent System of democratic centralism.⁸⁸

The Bloque and the International Communist Opposition

The Federación Comunista Iberica-Bloque Obrero y Campesino, and later the POUM, were associated with the International Communist Opposition rather than being an integral part of it. Bertram Wolfe wrote of the POUM that it "was close enough to the CPO to have sent a delegation from their armed forces to address us during the Civil War, but I think they had no organic ties with the Opposition here."⁸⁹ In another letter he said that the Lovestoneites "had fraternal relations with the POUM."⁹⁰

It is clear that the ICO and its affiliates looked upon the Federation-Bloque as their counterpart in Spain. An official report on the July 1932 International Conference of the ICO said that "The Iberian Communist Federation (the opposition party in Spain) had been invited to the conference for the purposes of information and for expression of opinion. From Comrade Joaquín Maurín... there came a detailed report about the activity of this organization.... The conference empowered the buro to answer in detail and to maintain connections with the Spanish comrades."⁹¹

The parties belonging to the ICO kept a sympathetic eye on the "Maurín group," as they frequently referred to them. Their attitude was one of friendly criticism. In a long article in July 1932 Bertram Wolfe noted that the position

of the BOC "is in general correct, certainly far more correct than that of the official C.P. or the Trotsky group." Wolfe then criticized certain theoretical formulations of Maurín, but added that "The Federation and the Worker-Peasant Block. . . have rightly insisted on the restoration of Party democracy and have maintained democracy in their own ranks. They have preserved a thoroly [sic] Communist orïentation and their interest in international Communist matters."⁹²

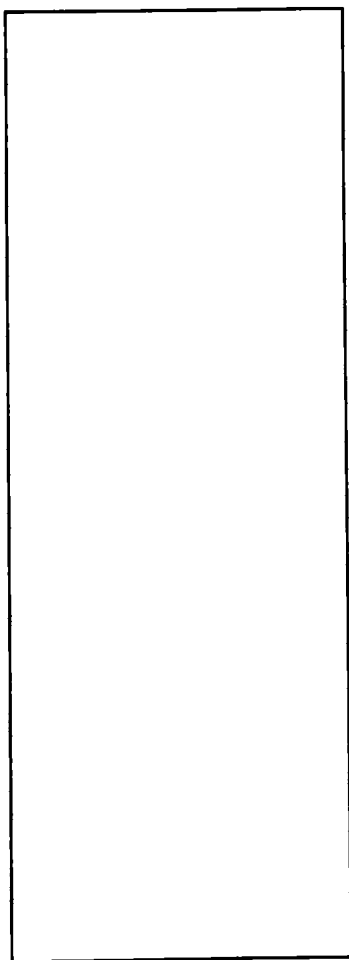
Although maintaining fraternal relations with the ICO and its member parties, the Federation-BOC also took an active part in the so-called London bureau. Soon after the London bureau's first conference in 1933, *Workers Age* published an article by Maurín with an introduction which noted that "It will be clear to all readers of *Workers Age* that the views of Comrade Maurín on the Paris Conference are not quite those of the Communist Opposition. With his analysis of Trotskyism, we are in full agreement."⁹³

The relations between the International Communist Opposition and the POUM were to be much closer during the Spanish Civil War. Also, there was a rapprochement between the London bureau and the ICO which eliminated one of the main stumbling blocks in relations between the Maurín group and the International Communist Opposition. However, during the period of existence of the BOC, it is clear that although the ICO affiliates regarded the Maurín group as fundamentally their counterpart in Spain, it did not form an integral part of the International Communist Opposition. As we noted at the beginning of this chapter, therefore, the Federation-Bloque was "associated with" rather than "affiliated to" the ICO.

The POUM and the Spanish Civil War

The POUM was destined to have somewhat less than two years of legal existence. During that period it played an active though limited role in the election of 1936 and was an important factor in the social revolution which swept Republican (or Loyalist) Spain during the first months of the Civil War. However, the POUM fell victim to Stalin's drive to gain total control of the Spanish Republic and to manipulate the Civil War to serve his own best interests. To assure Stalinist control over Republican Spain, it was necessary to crush all groups which stood in the way of the Spanish Communist Party. Logically, the POUM, as a dissident Communist movement and as the weakest opponent of Stalinism, was the first target against which the wrath and growing power of the Stalinists was turned.

After first getting the POUM thrown out of the government of Catalonia in December 1936, the Stalinists were able seven months later to get the party outlawed and its principal leaders arrested. They murdered Andrés Nin, and only a few months before the end of the Civil War arranged for what Julián Gorkin has called "The Moscow Trial in Barcelona." This was the drama and the tragedy of the POUM.



The POUM and the Popular Front

In principle, the Partido Obrero de Unificación Marxista was opposed to the Popular Front. However, the political forces at work in Spain by the last months of 1935 overcame the POUM's natural inclination to oppose an alignment of working-class-based revolutionary parties with the middle-class Republican ones.

Soon after its establishment, the POUM sent a letter to all the country's labor unions and parties, urging a meeting "for the process of studying the way to carry out joint action."¹ However, they found little receptivity to such a uniting of the various labor groups, most of which did not bother to answer the POUM letter.

Meanwhile, since it was clear that new elections for the Spanish Parliament (Cortes) would soon be held, the Socialist Party had begun conversations with left-wing Republican groups for an electoral alliance. The official Communists, in conformity with the new Popular Front line of the Comintern, asked to be included in these negotiations. They were accepted and succeeded in getting the name "Popular Front" adopted for this alliance—thus leading some observers then and later to conclude mistakenly that the coalition had been organized on their initiative.² Aside from the Socialist Party, Communist Party, two left-wing Republican parties (Izquierda Republicana and Unión Republicana), and several Catalan autonomist parties, the Popular Front came to include the Partido Sindicalista (a small group of exanarcho-sindicalists headed by Angel Pestaña).³

Every leftist group of any significance was part of the coalition, and the POUM could hardly stay out of it. Therefore, on January 1, 1936, the executive committee of the POUM wrote the executive commission of the PSOE, and asked to be accepted as a member of the Popular Front. Although the Communists strongly objected, the Socialists overrode their objection, and on January 8, 1936, informed the POUM that it had been accepted. On January 15 Juan Andrade became a member of the leading committee of the Popular Front in Madrid, while Joaquín Maurín became the POUM representative in the Catalan Committee of the Front.⁴

The POUM proposed that it be given Popular Front candidacies in parts of the country where it had some substantial strength. It originally requested two candidates in Catalonia; Maurín in Barcelona and Nin in Tarragona. However, they finally had to settle for one—Maurín's candidacy in Barcelona.⁵ In addition, the POUM requested that it be allowed to name Popular Front candidates in Castellón, Valencia, and Badajoz, in all of which the POUM had a substantial organization. They were denied these nominations but were promised by the Popular Front national leadership that Andrés Nin could be the candidate for Teruel and Julián Gorkin a nominee from Cádiz. But the local parties in those areas, where the POUM had virtually no organization,

refused to accept either Nin or Gorkin. The upshot was that the POUM ended up with Joaquín Maurín as the only candidate on the Popular Front ticket. He was elected.⁶

The POUM looked upon the Popular Front as a transitory electoral alliance, unlike the official Communists, who insisted that it should continue in existence as a basis for governing the country. The official Communists' position won out.

The POUM was still committed to the Alianza Obrera. On May 27, 1936, *La Batalla* published a proposal of the POUM executive committee urging that the Alianza Obrera "be reorganized on a new basis." It said that although the Alianza "has three characteristic steps: A) organism of united front to carry out offensive and defensive actions; b) insurreccional organism, and c) organism of Power, it was once again back in the first phase which may be more or less long." The POUM urged that "In this stage, the mission of the Alianza Obrera is to emphasize increasingly the unity of the labor movement in all areas, and offer battle, politically, socially and economically against the bourgeoisie and the bourgeois State, with the objective of developing among the working class a combative consciousness and to progressively reduce the positions of its class enemy, the bourgeoisie."⁷

The POUM's call for revigoration of the Alianza Obrera went unheeded. Meanwhile, on March 8, 1936, Joaquín Maurín had announced to a meeting of the parliamentary bloc of the Popular Front that the POUM was withdrawing. "He explained that in his opinion, the People's Front had been an election bloc and that as such had lost its significance for the working class after the elections. The majority of the election bloc, he continued, is in favor of parliamentary action only. The main task of the proletariat today, however, is to concentrate on extraparlimentary activities. It is prevented from doing so by its alliance with the petty bourgeoisie."⁸

Maurín in Parliament

During his four months in the Cortes, Maurín spoke four times. Twice he interrogated the government on particular actions. The other two times he made political speeches. On April 15, on the occasion of the first vote of confidence for the government of Prime Minister Manuel Azaña, Maurín explained that although he was going to vote in favor of the government, he wanted to express objections to the political line Azaña was taking. He did not agree with the prime minister that the great need of the moment was to reestablish "calm," but felt that the major requirement was for the government to carry out the Popular Front electoral promise of punishing those who had perpetrated atrocities against workers during the October 1934 uprising. Furthermore, "There is no question, the alternative is certain: either socialism will triumph or fascism will triumph. Democracy in the 20th Century, after the

triumph of the Russian Revolution... is simply a moment of transition between two antagonistic periods. The dilemma is: fascism or socialism."⁹

On June 16, after Azaña had been elected president of the Republic, in place of Niceto Alcalá Zamora, deposed by parliament, there was a new vote of confidence, this time for a cabinet headed by Santiago Cesares Quiroga. Maurín this time attacked the government for not carrying out the Popular Front program and criticized strongly the suspension of constitutional guarantees imposed by the Azaña cabinet. He argued that "There is a prefascist situation in the country, that is undeniable." The only way to deal with it was for the government "to nationalize the land, the railroads, large industry, the mines, banking, and to adopt other progressive measures, such as those adopted by Blum in France." Then Maurín warned, "If not, within two months we shall see the most intense counter-revolution and perhaps then it will be too late to contain the outrages of fascism, of which there is more danger than perhaps we in these seats understand."¹⁰ His words proved very prophetic.

Maurín's positions did not go unnoticed by the official Communists. Victor Alba has noted that "On April 24, *Mundo Obrero*, Madrid Communist daily, denounced 'the renegade Maurín, enemy of the Popular Front,' and in the Cortes, Dolores Ibarruri ('La Pasionaria') attacked Maurín because he had declared to some journalists that the workers parties should separate themselves from the Popular Front and form their own front."¹¹

POUMistas and the Labor Movement

With their insistence that the only meaningful alternative in national politics was fascism or socialism, and their urging that the workers take power, it is understandable that the POUMistas were very active in the labor movement in the months preceding the outbreak of the Civil War. They particularly stressed the need for trade union unity, but although some steps were taken to unite the very splintered labor movement, the POUM had no part in these. In May 1936 the CNT, at its congress in Zaragoza, readmitted the so-called Treintistas, who had withdrawn three years earlier because of domination of the CNT by the Federación Anarquista Iberica. In addition, the Zaragoza congress took steps to try to develop a closer relationship with the Socialist-controlled labor group, the Unión General de Trabajadores. However, the unions under control of the POUM were not included in this movement for unity, in spite of the fact that most of them had originally belonged to the CNT.¹²

The POUMistas brought together the local federations they controlled in Lérida, Gerona, Tarragona, and a few smaller Catalan towns and a few unions they dominated in Barcelona, in a convention on May 1, 1936, to form the Federación Obrera de Unidad Sindical (FOUS). Andrés Nin was elected its general secretary and Pere Bonet, assistant secretary. These were the two in charge of POUM trade union work.

Victor Alba has noted that "The FOUS announced from its birth that it didn't want to be just another small central labor organization, but rather that it proposed to work for unification of the other central labor groups." It planned a trade union conference for the fall of 1936 "to try to unite the various Catalan central labor groups, and then to bring pressure for the union of the CNT and UGT, to which would be added unions outside of both of them."¹³ However, in spite of the wishes of founders of the FOUS, the organization was forced "whether it wished it or not . . . to behave as a central labor organization, and to find itself opposed on various occasions to the CNT." It led several important strikes in the few weeks before the outbreak of the Civil War, including walkouts of printing trades workers in Barcelona and of commercial employees throughout Catalonia.¹⁴

Anti-Stalinist Position of the POUM

The POUM assumed an increasingly anti-Stalinist position in the months preceding the Civil War. "It had lost its illusions about the USSR. Stalin appeared as what he really was in the eyes of the POUMistas. While in Europe, with the tool of the Popular Front, the Communists succeeded in getting people to accept almost all their propaganda—for example, the story of 'the most democratic constitution of the world' (the Soviet one of 1936)—and to forget certain bothersome realities, such as the concentration camps, ideological colonialism, the deifying of Stalin, the persecution of all who opposed them, the POUM in Spain began to see things as they really were, to understand that ideological colonialism is not an isolated fact, but a consequence and part of a whole system of falsification of the revolution."¹⁵ This ideological position was to ensure the POUM persecution by the Stalinists as soon as the latter were in a position to carry out such persecution.

Pre-Civil War Political Situation

In the months between victory of the Popular Front in February 1936 and the outbreak of the Civil War five months later, Spain went through a particularly violent period. Victor Alba has noted that "The peasants seized land. The labor organizations became militarized. Demonstrations of the blue-shirted members of the Falange, the light blue-shirted United Socialist Youth, the blue work shirts of the POUMistas passed one another in the streets on Sundays and fought and sometimes shot at each other. In the Universities, the Falangista and Leftist elements fought. . . . There were constant clashes between workers and police, peasants and civil guards. Arrests, deaths, closing of headquarters of Rightists and workers, censorship."¹⁶

During these months the government was in the hands of the middle-class Republican parties, in spite of the fact that the Popular Front victory of February 1936 had been won principally by the working-class based parties and the decision of the anarchosyndicalist workers to vote for left-wing candidates. Outside the government the labor and radical groups carried on extensive agitation, and the faction of the Socialists led by the veteran trade unionist, Francisco Largo Caballero, and the POUM called for a working-class revolution. At the same time the country's Right abandoned any belief in the parliamentary system and political democracy. Civilian politicians and right-wing elements in the military—with support of most of the hierarchy of the Catholic church—plotted overthrow of the Republic. This plotting culminated in the outbreak of the military uprising, first in Spanish Morocco on July 17, and then in Spain itself on the following two days.

The Revolution in Catalonia

With the news of the military revolt in Morocco, Luis Companys, president of the regional government of Catalonia, went on the radio to tell the people to be calm, that the situation in Catalonia was well in hand. However, neither the anarchosyndicalists of the CNT-FAI nor the POUMistas believed this.

Late in the night of July 18 and early on the morning of July 19, Josep Coll and Julián Gorkin of the POUM went to ask the interior minister of Catalonia that arms be distributed to the workers. Their request was turned down. However, the POUM executive committee remained in permanent session, and the POUMistas issued three manifestos. The first, distributed early on the morning of July 19, called for revitalization of the Alianza Obrera; the second, by the POUM youth group, the Juventud Comunista Iberica (JCI), called upon soldiers to desert; and the third, in the name of the POUM, called the workers of Catalonia out on general strike.¹⁷

On the morning of July 19 fighting broke out in Barcelona and other Catalan cities and towns. Although most of the struggle against the rebellion was carried on by the CNT, to which the great majority of the unionists of Catalonia belonged, the POUM also played an active part. They fought particularly in the Plaza de Catalonia and the Plaza Universidad and in front of the Atarazanas army barracks. Germinal Vidal, secretary general of the JCI, was killed in the fighting in the Plaza Universidad.¹⁸

The cause of the Republic was saved in Catalonia by the workers organizations, particularly the CNT and the POUM, with some help from the police. Once the fighting was over, three anarchist leaders of the CNT conferred with President Companys. He was very frank with the anarchists, admitting that the CNT was responsible for saving the republic in Catalonia, and offering to turn the government over to them. However, they refused his offer, agreeing to allow the middle-class autonomist government to remain in office. Victor Alba has

described the paradoxical situation which existed in Catalonia after the suppression of the right-wing military revolt:

In July 1936 there existed in fact a situation which all Marxists considered ideal: there was a working class with class consciousness and which wanted power. This was what the Marxists had always dreamed of, and what they almost never—or never—had achieved. And this situation, which did not exist in Germany in 1919 or in France in 1936, where the Marxists were strong, occurred in Catalonia where Marxism was a minority and was represented exclusively by the POUM, and this at a moment when the world labor movement was in a crisis, in retreat, corrupted by Stalinism and made soft by reformism. And that aroused class, which wanted to govern, was massed in an organization which rejected power, which was afraid of it.¹⁹

However, power had to be exercised by someone. It really was in the hands of the working-class unions and parties. The middle-class government of Catalonia was in no position to exercise effective control. As a result, on July 21, the *Comité de Milicias* was organized, a group destined for several months to be the real government of Catalonia. It had as its purported objective the recruiting and organizing of militia groups to go to the front which had been established in Aragon, to the west of Catalonia, to fight the rebel army, which held control of half of Aragon and much of the rest of northern Spain. However, in fact the *Comité de Milicias* took over most governmental functions in Catalonia. It consisted of representatives of all the trade unions and Left parties of Catalonia. The POUM named Josep Rovira as its representative on the *Comité de Milicias*.²⁰

Political Positions of POUM After July 19

Joaquín Maurín was no longer the political leader of the POUM. A day before the military uprising began, he had gone to Galicia to give a speech in Santiago de los Caballeros. On July 19 he went to the port city of Coruña where he conferred with the local civil governor. The next day troops revolted and seized control of the city. Maurín fell prisoner and remained in Franco jails for a decade.²¹ For several months the other POUM leaders thought that Maurín had been killed. Gorkin made the announcement of his death over the radio in Barcelona.

With Maurín's disappearance, Andrés Nin was named political secretary of the party and Julián Gorkin, its international secretary.²² Whether the presence of Maurín at the head of the POUM during the first year of the Civil War would have made any difference in the party's policies or in its ultimate fate, it is impossible to say. However, it is certain that in retrospect, Maurín was very critical of certain aspects of the policies the POUM followed. He told the author that he thought that the POUM had taken an "impossibilist" stance during the war. Furthermore, he was critical of a number of its specific actions and

policies. Maurín argued that the POUM made a mistake in not entering the Spanish Republican government of Largo Caballero at the time of the entry into it of the Confederación Nacional de Trabajo. He was convinced that if the POUM had wished to enter, Largo Caballero who was quite friendly to them, would have been glad to have them represented. Maurín added that the POUMistas had not sought to become members of the national Spanish regime because they "didn't consider it important." He also felt that the POUM had been mistaken in its opposition to transformation of the militia, at first organized by the various parties and trade union groups, into a regular army.²³

Victor Alba has also shed some light on the question of whether the policy of the POUM changed, at least in degree, with the disappearance of Maurín. He has published a letter of Maurín to Pierre Broué on the subject:

In the brief time that Nin and I were together in the leadership of the POUM . . . there was never any disagreement between us. However, it surprised me in one meeting of the Executive Committee . . . when Nin asked me to write an article for *Nueva Era*, the doctrinal review of the party, of which he was the editor, about what I understood by "democratic-socialist revolution," which had been the political basis of the BOC. Such a proposal made me suppose that Nin still fundamentally followed the Trotskyist thesis of "socialist revolution." It is the thesis which the POUM maintained when I disappeared from the scene and which, being fundamentally mistaken, contributed to its ruin.

On another occasion . . . after a long interview I had in Madrid with Largo Caballero, in which he expressed to me the utility of having the POUM merge with the PSOE, when I reported on that interview to the Executive Committee of the POUM, Nin was the one who most strongly opposed the idea of such fusion. The backing of the POUM would have strengthened the position of Largo Caballero in the face of the Communist Party and the Prieto sector. It is well to remember that the Socialist sector most pro-Communist during the civil war was anti-Caballerista, the one of Prieto-Négrin.²⁴

At another point Victor Alba noted that "Maurín is a strategist, Nin a functionary. In spite of this, the latter succeeded in establishing good contact with the rank and file. But he never would succeed in becoming a leader capable of guiding his party and . . . he would commit some important errors. The POUM would suffer during all the civil war the absence of Maurín."²⁵

The Revolution in Catalonia and Elsewhere

With suppression of the uprising of July 17-19 in much of Spain, a social revolution took place in all parts of the country remaining loyal to the Republic except the Basque provinces, where the socially conservative Basque Nationalist Party was dominant. The revolutionary process was most notable in Catalonia.

With very little central direction, the workers took over factories, public utilities, and the railroads. In the countryside the peasants and agricultural

laborers seized the land of large landholders and either kept it as private holdings or collectivized it, usually under anarchosyndicalist influence. At the same time municipal governments were taken over by representatives of the local unions and the political parties supporting the Republic. In Catalonia the regional government assumed power which, according to the constitution, belonged to the national administration, such as control of the banking system and establishment of a defense ministry.

Many decades of Marxist and anarchist propaganda lay behind this revolution. However, it was to an amazing degree spontaneous with local unions, party units, and groups of workers and peasants. It obeyed no national plan. It was in the first few days and weeks largely uncoordinated. It was undoubtedly the most spontaneous movement for social change which has occurred in the twentieth century. Victor Alba has commented that "It is necessary to insist on this. The POUM, like all of the other workers organizations, vacillated after July 19. But the workers didn't vacillate. The Executive didn't adopt its own policy, but reflected that which the rank and file of the parties, the local committees, developed spontaneously, without waiting for direction from Barcelona. It wasn't Nin, Bonet, Arquer, Rovira, etc., who determined the policy of the POUM, but it was the rank and file POUMistas who, by their behavior determined the policy of the Executive."²⁶

By September 1936 the revolutionary process started to become "institutionalized," and in retrospect, one can see that the counter-revolution began. A new cabinet was formed by President Companys, with representatives of his Esquerra Catalá, the CNT, the FAI, the Partido Socialista Unificado de Catalonia (the new official Communist party of the region), and the POUM. At the same time, the Consejo de Milicias was phased out, and the Consejo de Economía, set up to coordinate the worker-run industries, was brought under control of the government instead of being virtually autonomous.²⁷ The process of reversing the revolution went further in October, with substitution of municipal councils for the revolutionary local governments set up at the beginning of the Civil War. Each party represented in the Catalan government got three municipal councillors for every member it had in the regional cabinet—resulting in a loss for the POUM and a substantial gain for the official Communists.²⁸ The culmination of this phase of the Civil War, insofar as Catalonia was concerned, came in November 1936, when the Catalan government was reorganized once again. This change was notable not only for the ousting of the POUM, but also for reduction of the influence of the CNT.

The POUM in the Revolutionary Process

The POUM took an active part in the revolution in Catalonia and in some other Loyalist areas. They were represented in the new municipal authorities. Victor Alba has noted that "In some places—where the POUM was strong—

these were constituted only with workers representatives; in others, elements of the Esquerra were also accepted. In Lérida, where the POUM was the principal force, the committee was formed with the CNT, the POUM and the PSUC. The president—and public order director—were POUMistas." In Castellón, to the south of Catalonia, the local committee consisted of CNTers, POUMistas and Socialists. In Valencia all parties and workers groups, including the POUM, were represented. Alba noted that "In other areas, the POUM was accepted, no matter how small it was locally. The POUMistas had high posts in the Basque country—where there were hardly any nuclei of the POUM."²⁹

As we have already noted, the POUM was represented in the Comité de Milicias of Catalonia. It was also represented in the Consejo de Economía, set up to coordinate the Catalan economy. The POUM was enthusiastic about this body, which it saw as "avoiding the disorder, the upsets of disorganization, in a word, all the revolutionary chaos which until now has been considered inherent in great social convulsions."³⁰ The Consejo sought to plan the regional economy, insofar as circumstances permitted. One of its most important decisions was to legalize the seizure of factories by the unionists.³¹ Some POUMistas have argued that Andrés Nin was the major force in the Consejo; most of the rest of its members were workers with little formal training in economics.³²

When the Catalan government was reorganized in September, the POUM was included in the new cabinet. However, this did not occur without opposition within the party. The POUM had been opposed to the Popular Front as a permanent organization, and the new Catalan government was virtually a government of the Popular Front plus the CNT. An enlarged meeting of the POUM central committee was called to decide whether the party should join the government. Delegations from Lérida, Barcelona, and the youth organization opposed the step. However, the majority approved, in considerable degree because failure to join a government of which the CNT was becoming a party would look like the criticism of the CNT, with whom the POUM was trying to establish close relations. On September 25, Andrés Nin, the POUM negotiator, agreed to the terms offered for entry into the government—although apparently he did so without getting approval of the central committee.³³

The new Catalan government included three members of Esquerra Catalá, including the prime minister; three of the CNT, one each of the PSUC, POUM, UGT, and Unión de Rabassaires. Andrés Nin became minister of justice.

The POUM also participated in new organizations to control the police. Josep Coll of the POUM was secretary general of the ministry of public order and member of the Junta de Seguridad created right after July 19 to control the police. Josep Rodes, a POUMista, was director of public order in Lérida, where another POUMista was district attorney. However, Victor Alba has noted that the POUM was never very successful in getting its members to join the police, in contrast to the PSUC, which infiltrated many of their people into the police force—with important consequences subsequently.³⁴

POUMistas also exercised considerable influence in nongovernmental organizations during this early period of the Civil War. Members of the party were among the leaders of the cooperative movement, as well as of the Unified School Committee, established to reorganize the educational system.³⁵

The membership of the POUM increased substantially during the first months of the Civil War. Shortly before the outbreak of the conflict the party had about nine thousand members. By October 1936 it had forty thousand members, which compared with forty-two thousand in the PSUC, and two hundred thousand for the official Communist Party elsewhere in the Republican area.³⁶

Like all the other parties and labor groups supporting the Republic, the POUM in Catalonia (and elsewhere) seized control of many buildings with the outbreak of the Civil War. In Barcelona they took over the printing press of a Carlist daily, *El Correo Catalan*, in order to print *La Batalla*, which now became a daily. A building belonging to J. Bertran Musitu, who became head of espionage for Franco, was converted by the POUM into the Maurin Sanatorium. The palace of the viceroy's wife was used to install a library and the Center of Marxist Studies. The party's headquarters was set up in the former office of the Banco de Galicia.³⁷

Outside Catalonia, where most of their strength was concentrated, the POUM played a less important role. However, it was represented in the Council of Asturias, which ran that northwestern part of Loyalist Spain.³⁸ In Valencia, a Popular executive committee, which ran the region until transfer of the Spanish government there from Madrid in November 1936, had eleven parties and union groups represented in it. The POUM, the CNT, FAI, Valencian Left Party, Sindicalist Party, and Unión Republicana constituted a left bloc in the committee, while in its right wing were the official Communists, Socialists, Left Republicans, Valencian Nationalist Party and the UGT.³⁹

The POUM in the Government of Catalonia

Andrés Nin was minister of justice of Catalonia for about three months. He substantially reorganized and institutionalized the "popular tribunals" set up at the beginning of the Civil War, established a judicial body to review death sentences and propose commutations to the president of Catalonia, lowered the legal age of maturity to eighteen, established very simple adoption procedures, and legalized weddings performed by militia officers.⁴⁰

However, Nin was a member of the minority on many issues. He lost a move to establish a bank to finance the worker-controlled industries, and Nin and the CNT representatives had to threaten to resign to prevent adoption of a decree to have the state take over the firms which workers had seized and to compensate the former owners. Often Nin, as POUM representative, was allied with the

three CNT ministers, but they were overruled by middle-class party UGT and PSUC representatives.⁴¹

The POUM accepted a number of measures of the Catalan government to which there was certainly objection within the party. Nin agreed to dissolution of the revolutionary municipal governments established in July. The international publication of the POUM, *La Revolution Espagnole*, explained that "obviously, one can lament the suppression of the revolutionary initiative (of the Committees), but the need for codifying different municipal organizations must be recognized."⁴²

The POUM in the Military

Like all the other parties and labor groups supporting the Loyalist cause, the POUM organized its own "columns" of militiamen to confront the old army, risen in rebellion. Departure of the first POUM column for the front facing Zaragoza was announced on July 23.⁴³ On the next day another POUM militia unit of fifteen hundred men went to the front,⁴⁴ and a third one left on July 27. All these were Catalan columns, but on July 28 a POUM column left Castellón for the Teruel front. Two periodicals for POUM militiamen, *Combat* in Lérida and *Front* in Tarrassa, were established.⁴⁵

Most POUM troops went to the Aragon front, although some three hundred of the POUM militia participated, along with CNT soldiers and two thousand from the Catalan nationalist Estat Català party, in the unsuccessful attempt to take the Balearic island of Mallorca.⁴⁶

Within a few weeks, and considerably before organization of the famous International Brigades, the POUM had several hundred foreign volunteers in their military units. For the most part these were members of parties belonging to the London bureau. They were formed into a "shock battalion" named after Lenin. There were particularly large numbers of Germans and Italians in its ranks. Its most famous member was the British writer George Orwell.⁴⁷

Within a few months the move was begun to form the militia "columns" into regular army units. The units organized by the parties and labor groups were reorganized into "divisions," those under POUM control constituting the Twenty-ninth Division. Together with the CNT's Twenty-fifth and Twenty-sixth divisions and the PSUC's Twenty-seventh Division, they manned the Aragon front.⁴⁸

The constant complaint of POUM and CNT division on the Aragón front was that they were being deprived of adequate arms and munitions. George Orwell, who for many months served in the Twenty-ninth Division, has borne out this complaint. In his book on his experiences in Loyalist Spain, he wrote of "the complete lack of war materials of every description. It needs an effort to realize how badly the militia were armed at this time. Any public school O. T. C. in England is far more like a modern army than we were."⁴⁹ If one keeps in mind

that Orwell was on the Aragón front with the POUM troops until the end of April 1937, many months after Soviet arms had begun to arrive in Republican Spain in considerable quantities, the complaints of the POUMistas and anarchosyndicalists that they were purposefully being deprived of these arms is borne out. Orwell, again, explains the logic of this deprivation:

In order to check every revolutionary tendency and make the war as much like an ordinary war as possible, it became necessary to throw away the strategic opportunities that actually existed. . . . There is very little doubt that arms were deliberately withheld lest too many of them should get into the hands of the Anarchists, who would afterwards use them for a revolutionary purpose; consequently, the big Aragon offensive which would have made Franco draw back from Bilbao, and possibly from Madrid, never happened.⁵⁰

POUM Loss of Trade Union Strength

Between outbreak of the Civil War and the end of 1936 the POUM lost most of its trade union influence, due to the position adopted by the CNT. The CNT leaders and their anarchist mentors in the Federación Anarquista Iberica insisted on continuing to see the basic rivalry in the Catalan labor movement as being between the "libertarians" or anarchosyndicalists and the "Marxists," and they made little or no distinction between Marxists of the POUM and the supposed Marxists of the PSUC. The CNT-FAI did not recognize that the real division in this period was between those who wanted to maintain and extend the social revolution which had taken place with the outbreak of the Civil War (the CNT-FAI and the POUM), and those who wanted to roll back these changes (the PSUC, UGT, and middle-class Catalan autonomists). Even less did they understand the drive of the Communists, including the PSUC, to gain absolute control of Republican Spain.

On July 30 the Federación Obrera de Unidad Sindical, the POUM-controlled trade union federation in Catalonia, issued a call for unification of the labor movement in the region to defend the revolution. They promised to take the lead in trying to achieve this.⁵¹

In the months that followed the trade union situation in Catalonia changed markedly. The UGT in pre-Civil War Catalonia had had only a handful of members, and the labor movement in Barcelona had been completely dominated by the CNT, while in provincial cities the FOUS was much more important than the UGT. However, the balance of forces changed swiftly after July 19. The UGT grew suddenly, gaining most of its new members not from traditionally organized workers, but from middle-class people. After July 19 there was a premium on being a member of a union; even the middle class wanted such affiliation. So large numbers of white-collar workers and even small businessmen flocked to the UGT, because of fear of the revolutionary proclivities of the CNT.⁵²

The UGT was under control of the Partido Socialista Unificado de Catalonia, formed a few days after outbreak of the Civil War (without any conventions to decide on the matter), by a merger of the Socialist Party's Catalan Federation, the regional organization of the Spanish Communist Party, the *Movimiento Socialista de Cataluña*, and the *Partido Proletario Catalán*. It joined the Comintern, and in practice was the Catalan branch of the Spanish Communist Party.⁵³

The anarchosyndicalists from the beginning of the Civil War insisted on giving virtual equal representation to the UGT in revolutionary organizations, even when the UGT was very small, and subsequently when it became more representative of the bourgeoisie than of the working class. They gave no such recognition to the FOUS. They were undoubtedly influenced by the fact that in Spain as a whole the labor movement was about equally divided between the CNT and the UGT.

The CNT supported a decree of the Catalan government of August 10 which provided for compulsory unionization. The next day the CNT and UGT formed a liaison committee, leaving out the FOUS. The FOUS was therefore forced to choose between joining the UGT or the CNT. The latter would not accept the FOUS unions on the ground that they were "Marxist," in spite of the fact that most of them had originally been members of the CNT. Thus, the FOUS was forced to join forces with the UGT, which rejected the idea of a formal merger of the two groups, fearful that the FOUS, which was of equal numerical strength with it, would dominate the unified group. As a result the FOUS ordered its member unions to join the UGT, which accepted them individually.⁵⁴

Within a very short time the PSUC-dominated Catalan UGT leadership resolved the dilemma presented by the regional organization being controlled by the PSUC, while many of its affiliated organizations were under POUM influence, by removing the POUMista leaders from the local unions. The POUM thus lost its trade union base by the end of 1936.⁵⁵ The same thing happened in the rural areas, where peasant groups controlled by the POUM joined with those of the PSUG to form a *Unión de Sindicatos Campesinos*, which joined the UGT. POUMistas were soon removed by the PSUC heads of the UGT from all posts of importance in the peasant organizations.⁵⁶

The Communist Drive to Power

During the first two or three months of the war, the official Communists were still a relatively weak force within Republican politics; particularly in Catalonia, where CNT influence was overwhelming. Furthermore, the Soviet Union was cooperating in the farce of "non-intervention" in which all the big powers were engaged, and sent little if any armaments to the Loyalists.

However, by October the situation had begun to change fundamentally. On the one hand, the PSUC in Catalonia and the official Communist Party in the

rest of Republican Spain had become the principal refuges of middle-class people fearful of the revolutionary turn of events after July 18-19, and had vastly increased their membership. The Partido Comunista was said to have risen from ten thousand members to some two hundred thousand within a matter of weeks.⁵⁷

On the other hand, Stalin had changed his tactics. General W. G. Krivitsky, then director of Soviet military intelligence in Western Europe, reported several years later on a meeting of the Politburo at which Stalin announced that the USSR was ready to extend aid to the Spanish Republic. He noted that "Stalin was of the opinion that it would be possible to create in Spain a regime controlled by Moscow."⁵⁸ Krivitsky also reported on a meeting in the Lubyanka prison on September 14, presided over by Yagoda, then head of the NKVD (secret police), and including the head of the army general staff, the commander of the military forces of the NKVD, and Slutsky, head of the foreign division of the NKVD. He noted: "This conference of Lubyanka also put the Soviet secret police in command of the operations of the Comintern in Spain. It decided to coordinate and harmonize the activities of the Spanish Communist parties with the Cheka."⁵⁹

After receiving the gold reserves of the Republic as prepayment, Stalin finally agreed to provide the Loyalists with arms. At the same time he dispatched to Spain a vast panoply of Soviet and foreign Communist agents of all sorts, including advisers to the Spanish Communist Party and PSUC, a wide range of military men, and most important of all, a small legion of NKVD officials.

The stage was thus set for the drama which was to be played out during the remainder of the Spanish Civil War. In return for relatively limited quantities of arms—already paid for with the Republic's gold—Stalin demanded the widest range of concessions. These included the right to cancel military offensives agreed upon by the Spanish military and political authorities; freedom for the Soviet NKVD to operate freely behind the Republican lines, arresting, torturing and killing whomsoever it chose; and elimination of any individuals or groups which stood in the way of total Communist control of the Spanish Republic. These political purges included first, the removal of the POUM from the Catalan government, then six months later its outlawing and arrest of its leaders; elimination of Francisco Largo Caballero as prime minister, and subsequent persecution of that part of the Socialist Party still loyal to him; elimination early in 1938 of Socialist leader Indalecio Prieto as minister of war; and finally, a few weeks before the end of the war, attempted removal of virtually all remaining military commanders not subject to Communist Party discipline, a move which brought about deposition of the government of the Communists' pliable tool, Dr. Juan Negrín, and presaged the final surrender of the Republican forces in Madrid and the Levante region.⁶⁰

George Orwell, in *Homage to Catalonia*, first published within months of the end of the Spanish Civil War, was one of the first to spell out the process we have described. He wrote:

The Russians were in a position to dictate terms. There is very little doubt that these terms were, in substance, "Prevent revolution or you get no weapons," and that the first move against the revolutionary elements, the expulsion of the POUM from the Catalan Generalite [sic] was done under orders from the USSR. It has been denied that any direct pressure was exerted by the Russian government, but the point is not of great importance, for the Communist parties of all countries can be taken as carrying out Russian policy, and it is not denied that the Communist Party was the chief mover first against the POUM, later against the Anarchists and against Caballero's section of the Socialists, and in general, against a revolutionary policy. Once the USSR had intervened the triumph of the Communist Party was assured.⁶¹

Beginning of the Communist Attack on the POUM

The POUM as the weakest anti-Stalinist group in Loyalist Spain, was understandably the first victim of the Stalinists' drive towards absolute power. It stood largely alone, had a limited popular base, and would be relatively easy to destroy. Furthermore, the campaign against it would serve both to disorient the larger and more important enemies, the CNT and the Socialists, and to make familiar certain arguments which would be useful later against the anarchosyndicalists and all Socialists not willing to submit to Communist control: that those opposed to the Communists were to be equated with the fascists fighting on the other side in the Civil War; and that criticism of the Stalin regime in the Soviet Union was equivalent to treason to the Spanish Republic.

The struggle between official Communists and the POUM began almost as soon as the fighting of July 19 was over. On July 20 President Luis Companys invited the POUM to become part of the Catalan Popular Front. However, two days later PSUC leader Juan Comorera, who reportedly was already being advised by Comintern agent Erno Gero, insisted that the POUM not be admitted unless it "declared that it would adhere to the discipline" of the Popular Front. The POUM executive replied by saying that "We are disposed to establish contact in moments of danger. However, we do not believe that these contacts should be converted into a permanent organic union, and even less can we accept that the Committee be converted into a group of parties which destroys the indispensable independence of the political organizations, thus being converted itself into a de facto party."⁶²

At the end of September the first Soviet consul in Barcelona, V. A. Antonov-Ovsenko, arrived. At the official reception by the Catalan government, Andrés Nin, the only one who knew Russian, delivered a short message of welcome. But "Antonov acted as if he had never known him," in spite of the fact that they had worked together for years in Moscow and had been early partisans of Trotsky. Alba has cited a letter from CNT leader Diego Abad de Santillán, saying that when a few days later the new consul visited the CNT "I remember that poor Antonov began his relations with us by saying that Stalin was exceedingly unhappy at the presence of Nin in the Generalidad." Abad de Santillán added

"That was enough for us to express in every way our friendship for him (Nin)."⁶³

Shortly afterward Antonov spoke to the revolutionary Catalan chief of police, a CNTer, Aurelio Fernández, of the "danger" of the POUM. After reviewing the attitude of each political group in Catalonia towards the USSR, Antonov insisted that "We have here a dangerous enemy, the POUM." When he asked Fernández what he thought of the POUM, the reply was that he regarded the POUMistas as "sincere and firm revolutionaries." But Antonov-Ovsenko insisted that "They are our worst enemies. We shall treat them as such."⁶⁴

Meanwhile the POUM leaders had expressed themselves strongly on an issue certain to antagonize both Soviet and Spanish Communists, the first Moscow Trial of Zinoviev and Kamenev. When their execution was announced *La Batalla* published an editorial which said, "We are revolutionary socialists, Marxists (to call ourselves communists at a moment when in the name of communism communists were being assassinated would confuse people). In the name of socialism and of the revolutionary working class, we protest against the monstrous crime which has just been perpetrated in Moscow."⁶⁵ Victor Alba has noted that "No one in the ranks of POUM disagreed with the position it took on the question. The POUMista press would continue denouncing the other Moscow trials. Only when the official party and the PSUC began the open offensive against the POUM, some POUMistas would say, in private, that perhaps the posture of the Party with regard to the Moscow trials was not very diplomatic."⁶⁶

Another position of the POUM particularly enraged the Stalinists. Early in November Andres Nin proposed that the POUM executive suggest to President Companys that he give refuge to Leon Trotsky, who under Soviet pressure was being forced to leave Norway. The executive agreed reluctantly, and Nin presented the idea to the Catalan cabinet. Comorera of the PSUC strongly objected, while the other members postponed consideration, thus effectively throttling the idea. Victor Alba has commented that "It was not this suggestion of the POUM, obviously, which made the Communists take the offensive. But it gave them a good jumping-off place from which to launch what they had been preparing for some time."⁶⁷

Meanwhile the war front reached Madrid, and the Republican government fled to Valencia. Julián Gorkin and Juan Andrade went to Madrid to negotiate entry of the POUM into the Junta de Defensa, established to carry on the struggle there. Before leaving Valencia they got the approval of the Socialist and CNT members of Largo Caballero's government, and in Madrid the local Socialist and anarchist leaders approved participation of the POUM in the Junta.⁶⁸ However, it was vetoed by the Soviet embassy, a fact communicated to Enrique Rodríguez of the Madrid POUM by Manuel Albar of the Socialist Party who wrote "Ambassador Rosenberg vetoed your presence. It is unjust, undoubtedly, but we understand, the USSR is powerful, and between denying

ourselves the support of the USSR or the support of the POUM, there is no doubt possible."⁶⁹

Ouster of POUM from Catalan Government

Soviet representatives brought intense pressure on the Spanish and Catalan governments to remove the POUM from the Catalan regime, which resulted in its ultimate destruction. Some days after arrival of the first Soviet arms late in October 1936, Jesús Hernández, one of two Communist ministers in the Largo Caballero government, was summoned to the Soviet embassy, where he was introduced to Slutzky, chief of the foreign division of the NKVD. Slutzky sought to impress upon Hernández the need to eliminate the POUM. Although Hernández later claimed that he laughed at Slutzky's insistence that the POUMistas were Fascists and in contact with Franco's Falange, he agreed that when the NKVD presented him the evidence that Slutzky claimed that they had against the POUM, he would raise the issue within the cabinet. Slutzky told him that the NKVD had been urging Largo Caballero to outlaw the POUM, but that Largo Caballero was strongly resisting the idea.⁷⁰

Although it was too early to move for total elimination of the POUM, the time had come by the last weeks of 1936 for the Communists to obtain its removal from the Catalan government. The initiative came from the PSUC, and particularly Juan Comorera. He had several conferences with President Companys early in November, and on November 9 Companys announced the need for "a strong government with full powers, which imposes its authority."⁷¹ Nevertheless, another month was to pass before a full-fledged cabinet crisis developed.

The major resistance to expulsion of the POUM came from the CNT, and the Esquerra was also willing to resist as long as the CNT did. However, the CNTers finally gave in on the issue, feeling that that was the price necessary for continuing Soviet aid.⁷² On December 12 Companys and prime minister Josep Tarradellas dined with Soviet Consul Antonov-Ovsenko. Upon leaving, Tarradellas told waiting journalists, "It is useless to deny that a political problem has been raised."⁷³ On December 13, the CNT newspaper, *Solidaridad Obrera*, accused the Communists of provoking a crisis and urged that all political groups be kept in the regional government. However, that same day the cabinet "resigned," and a new one was formed immediately without the POUM.

The real meaning of what had occurred was clear to the POUM. *La Batallia* commented that "The rupture of the government could not be avoided because of the intransigence of the PSUC, which is not content just with asking our elimination, but wants the pure and simple annulment of all the revolutionary conquests of the working class, something which we would never permit."

On the day following the cabinet change, Comorera, when asked the cause for insistence by the PSUC on elimination of the POUM, answered: "The

unspeakable anti-Soviet campaign of the POUM. . . . To combat the USSR at this time is to commit treason. And we are against traitors." Three days after the Catalan cabinet change, Moscow's, *Pravda*, in commenting on it, was even more revealing: "In Catalonia has begun the elimination of the Trotskyites and anarchosindicalists; it will be carried to its conclusion with the same energy with which it has been done in the USSR."⁷⁴

The Communist Attack Intensified: December 1936-May 1937

Between exit of the POUM from the Catalan government and outbreak of the so-called "May Events" in Barcelona, the official Communist vilification and calls for extermination of the POUM reached hysterical levels. Communist efforts to get control of all reins of power in Catalonia and to bring down the national government of Largo Caballero were intensified. Meanwhile the POUM sought alliance with the CNT and tried to get it to see that the attack on the POUM was but the prelude to an offensive against the CNT-FAI.

Usually the official Communists referred to the POUMistas as "Trotskyites," although they were certainly aware that they were not. Santiago Carrillo, head of the Comintern-affiliated United Socialist Youth, who a couple of years before had sought to get Maurín and his followers to join the Socialist Party, in a speech on December 16, 1936, claimed that "the enemies of unity are the Trotskyite elements. . . . After the union of the Socialist youth with the Communist, they created the Juventud Comunista Iberica, (JCI), which, maneuvering with the name of Lenin and the Russian revolution, attempts to mislead the youth." He added that "What has been made clear is that when the Trotskyites combat the JSU (Juventud Socialista Unificada), the Communist Party, the Popular Front, the unity of the antifascist popular masses, in reality they are playing the sad role of agents of international fascism."⁷⁵

Three months later José Díaz, secretary general of the Spanish Communist Party, reported to a party plenum that "it is necessary to struggle to do away with the tolerance and lack of vigilance of certain proletarian organizations which establish links with counter-revolutionary Trotskyism, with the POUM, considering it as a faction of the labor movement." He went on to say that "Trotskyism, national and international, with whatever camouflage it covers itself, has been revealed as a counter-revolutionary terrorist organization at the service of international fascism."⁷⁶

However, all the attacks on the POUM in this period were not verbal. In March *La Batalla* was suppressed for four days "for not having observed the norms of the censorship."⁷⁷ Victor Alba has noted that "Of all the POUMista press outside of Catalonia, *El Comunista* of Valencia is the only periodical which could publish. *Juventud Roja*, organ of the JCI of Valencia, was suspended because the censor left it practically in blank."⁷⁸

Even in the military field the official Communists sabotaged the POUMistas.

Victor Alba has written that "On February 23 there was an operation ordered from Barbastro, of the 29th Division (of the POUM) against Vivel del Rio, which the forces of the PSUC (27th Division) should support from the flanks; but it didn't give this support, making the plan fail."⁷⁹

The Communists used every setback they were able to inflict on the POUM as "proof" of their charges that it was "fascist." For instance, "when the Junta of Madrid suppressed the POUMista press of the capital through Communist pressure (which in Madrid was irresistible), the Communist periodicals said that the decision of the Junta demonstrated that the POUM was fascist, since if this were not so, how could one imagine that its periodicals would be suspended?"⁸⁰

The POUM held two plenums of its central committee during this period, one in December, the other at the end of March. Those reiterated the POUM position that the way to win the war was to go forward with the revolution, which was what inspired the workers to fight. Victor Alba has noted that by March this thesis was dubious: "In the rest of the Republican zone, outside of Catalonia, it is very possible that the revolutionary forces were a minority, and . . . even in Catalonia who knows whether now, the enthusiasm of the 19th of July having passed, the majority wanted revolution."⁸¹

The POUM sought a closer alignment with the CNT, still the largest labor and political group in Catalonia. Its success was limited in part because of the POUM's constant reiteration of its Marxist antecedents and beliefs. Only the POUM youth group was able to form a united front, with the CNT's *Juventudes Libertarias* and some smaller groups.⁸² However, although the anarchosyndicalists did not accept overtures for an alliance with the POUM, they did resist demands for its suppression. Diego Abad de Santillán has described this resistance to Communist pressure (while accepting the Stalinists' appellation of "Trotskyites" for the POUM). After noting that "the Russian representatives . . . asked of us the extermination of the Partido Obrero de Unificación Marxista," he commented that

We, who have no interest in transplanting to Spain a fratricidal war without any other objective than personal domination, we who have accepted and sponsored the collaboration of all the forces of antifascism, whatever their size, and who have lived and collaborated with the representatives of Trotskyism in the same way as with those of Stalinism, we could not accept this reiterated desire no matter how precious the aid of Russia was in moments through which we were passing.

In this, we were not defending a party with which, aside from general collaboration, we have had no links. But as we respect one of the Communist tendencies, so we respect the other, and having been able easily to have dispensed with both, we had accepted them in the centers of antifascist action.⁸³

Antecedents of the May Events

The drive *Pravda* had announced in December to eliminate not only the POUM but also the anarchosyndicalists in Catalonia went forward apace

during the first half of 1937. It was marked by action as well as propaganda and generated much rank and file resistance from the CNT and less from the anarchosindicalist leadership. It culminated in the May Events. The German anarchist writer Agustín Souchy has noted that "A campaign was begun against the CNT and the FAI of the same character as that employed against the POUM. The Anarchists and Syndicalists were held responsible for everything that did not function smoothly." He added that "Such a malicious campaign had its effect. In January 1937 an insurrection arranged by the politicians broke out against the CNT-FAI in the town of Fatarella. The insurrection, as such was unimportant; but it was symptomatic."⁸⁴ Souchy has also observed that "Grave discontent reigned among the workers. The revolutionary workers of Catalonia felt humiliated by the gradual curtailment of their revolutionary conquests. . . . The representatives of the CNT-FAI vigorously opposed the application of police measures to meet the discontent of the masses."⁸⁵

Fenner Brockway, leader of the British Independent Labor Party, subsequently studied the May Events, and concluded that their immediate antecedents included an incident in Molins de Llobregat in which a PSUC leader was killed, incidents during the nights of April 28 and 29 when "Anarchists and PSUC adherents were forcibly disarming each other," growing conflict in provincial Catalan cities between CNT and PSUC elements, and suspension of all May Day demonstrations "for fear of serious disturbances."⁸⁶

Meanwhile, behind the scenes another important event had occurred. In April, Slutsky, west European chief of the NKVD, had arrived in Spain. Gorkin has insisted that "In Barcelona he supervised with 'Pedro' (Erno Gero) the preparation for the coup of May, as well as the prefabricated spying charges against the POUM which would justify its dissolution, the detention of its leaders, and their trial and condemnations."⁸⁷ Victor Alba has noted that in the midst of all this *La Batalla* continued to urge that "the workers not allow themselves to be provoked."⁸⁸ However, on May 3 they were provoked.

The May Events

The three day uprising in Barcelona, starting on May 3, 1937, was a spontaneous revolt of working-class followers of the CNT, seconded by those of the POUM. Had either of these groups planned the insurrection, power in Barcelona and most other cities of Catalonia would have been taken by them. At first, the CNT-POUM forces dominated the situation, and they could certainly have seized control if the insurrection had been planned.

Once fighting broke out, a POUM delegation, including Nin, Gorkin, and Andrade, urged upon the CNT leaders formation of a CNT-POUM government in Catalonia. They also suggested that Gorkin go to Valencia to talk with Largo Caballero to explain that what was going on was not a civil war within a civil war, but an attempt to resist Communist aggression. The CNT leaders

rejected both suggestions, insisting that they could use their influence in the Catalan and Spanish governments to curb the Communists' bid for power.⁸⁹

George Orwell, who was in Barcelona during the uprising, has given probably the most widely read description of it:

The immediate cause of friction was the Government's order to surrender all private weapons, coinciding with the decision to build up a heavily armed "non-political" police-force from which trade union members were to be excluded. The meaning of this was obvious to everyone; and it was also obvious that the next move would be taking over of some of the key industries controlled by the CNT. . . . On 3 May, the Government decided to take over the Telephone Exchange, which had been operated since the beginning of the war mainly by the CNT workers. . . . Salas, the Chief of Police (who may or may not have been exceeding his orders), sent three lorry-loads of armed Civil Guards to seize the building, while the streets outside were cleared by armed police in civilian clothes. At about the same time bands of Civil Guards seized various other buildings in strategic spots. Whatever the real intention may have been, there was a widespread belief that this was the signal for a general attack on the CNT by the Civil Guards and the PSUC. . . . The word flew around the town that workers' buildings were being attacked, armed Anarchists appeared in the streets, work ceased, and fighting broke out immediately. That night and the next morning barricades were built all over the town, and there was no break in the fighting until the morning of 6 May. The fight was, however, mainly defensive on both sides. . . . Roughly speaking the CNT-FAI-POUM forces held the working-class suburbs and the armed police forces and the PSUC held the central and official portion of the town.⁹⁰

Orwell has also commented, "There is no evidence that the outbreak had any direct effect upon the course of the war, though obviously it must have had if it had continued even a few days longer. It was made the excuse for bringing Catalonia under the direct control of Valencia, for hastening the break-up of the militia, and for the suppression of the POUM, and no doubt it also had its share in bringing down the Caballero Government."⁹¹

Suppression of the POUM

The most prominent victim of the May Events was Prime Minister Francisco Largo Caballero. The Communists and the Russians wanted him out. Jesús Hernández, Communist minister of education, made a violent speech attacking the prime minister. When Largo Caballero thereupon dismissed him, and President Manuel Azaña refused to accept this, Largo Caballero himself resigned. His successor was Juan Negrín, who was offered the post by Jesús Hernández. When Negrín told Hernández that he was not a Communist, the Stalinist leader answered, "That is better. If you were a Communist we could not propose you for Prime Minister. We want a premier friendly to the Communists—nothing more, but also nothing less."⁹²

With Largo Caballero the Communists had also eliminated any significant CNT influence in the national Spanish government. Diego Abad de Santillán, the CNT leader, has commented on the effect of the fall of Largo Caballero and the anarchists on the POUM. He has written that the extermination of the POUM "not being possible with our support" the Communists "took advantage of the Events of May to achieve the results they had wanted for so long." He added that "The repression against the POUM not only reflects the transfer of the internal polemics of the Russian dictators to Spain, but is a victory of the counter-revolution which is being organized in the very ranks of the antifascists."⁹³

Once Largo Caballero was out of the way, the Spanish Communists and the NKVD went ahead with their plans to outlaw the POUM. The first step, taken in the early morning of June 3, was the occupation of *La Batalla* by the police and suspension of its publication. Next came the arrest of the leaders of the POUM. General Orlov, head of the NKVD in Spain, ordered Colonel Antonio Ortega, newly appointed director general of security, to carry out this roundup, but Ortega first contacted Jesús Hernández, who in turn talked with Orlov. Shortly afterwards, Ortega was called before a Communist Party central committee meeting, where Palmiro Togliatti, Victorio Codovila, and Orlov were also present. Thereafter Ortega issued the orders for the arrest of the POUM leaders.⁹⁴

The actual arrests came on June 16. The POUM executive committee was meeting in the Instituto Maurín, to discuss two items: whether Gorkin, as editor, should appear the following day before the court considering charges of subversion against *La Batalla*; and the Second Congress of the POUM, scheduled to open three days later. They had just adjourned when it was announced that the police were below with an order to arrest Nin, Andrade, Arquer, and Gorkin.⁹⁵

Andrés Nin was subsequently murdered and there is no question about the fact that he was killed by the Communists.⁹⁶ The rest of the top leaders of the POUM were kept in jail for almost a year and a half, and ultimately were brought to trial in Barcelona in October 1938. Julián Gorkin has described the trial in detail. Although the charges of POUM conspiracy with Falangistas and of treason were obviously not proven, and one defendant, David Rey, was totally absolved, some of the rest were condemned to eleven years in prison, and the remainder to fifteen years. The prosecution had asked for the death penalty.⁹⁷ Gorkin has commented that "the judges had been obliged to make concessions, to make a compromise, and rather than accusations of concrete crimes, the sentence consists of a series of reproaches." Gorkin notes that the Communist press did not publish the sentence.⁹⁸

Those who were sentenced to prison joined forces with the principal officials of the national penitentiary in Barcelona as the Franco forces approached the city. Their escape is recounted at length by Gorkin and was something of a comedy of errors.⁹⁹

Meanwhile the POUM had been reorganized underground. Gorkin has said that after the arrest of the executive committee, "neither the Party nor the Youth, reorganized in the underground, had ceased to function even for a day; they published, with the difficulties that one can imagine, *Juventud Obrera* and *La Batalla* in reduced size. . . . An excellent member in Madrid, Alberto Aranda, at the head of a totally reliable small group, maintained liaison among Barcelona, Valencia and Madrid. . . . The new Executive Committee of the POUM, established the day after our detention, had established excellent relations with the CNT-FAI, with the UGT and with the Socialist Left of Largo Caballero and Luis Araquistáin.¹⁰⁰

The new executive consisted of Josep Rodes, Joan Farre and José Ruiría, the most active and prestigious leaders in Lérida; Jordi Arquer, Wildebaldo Solano, secretary of the youth; and Enric Adrober. Gorkin has noted that "The second Executive Committee . . . was itself arrested in the middle of 1938."¹⁰¹

Postmortem

The POUM was driven underground in the last twenty-one months of the Civil War. Even before capture of Catalonia by the Franco forces in January 1939, it was virtually impossible for the POUM to maintain any significant underground organization. All such possibility disappeared thereafter.

The POUM was the first and most completely victimized target of the Stalinist effort to seize absolute power in Loyalist Spain. Whether or not their insistence was correct that the revolution—which had taken place in Republican Spain and particularly in Catalonia at the beginning of the war—had to be maintained and expanded if the war was to be won, there can be little question about the fact that the Stalinists' drive to power severely undermined the Republican cause. It split the parties and union groups that mobilized most of the popular support for the Republic; it deprived the Loyalist cause of the talents and leadership not only of the POUM chiefs, but also those of the CNT leaders and of the Largo Caballero, Indalecio Prieto and right-wing factions of the Socialist Party. It also submitted the Spanish Republican government to control of a foreign power, the Soviet Union, whose generals gave orders to the Republican military; whose political servants manipulated Spanish politics, and whose secret police terrorized all political elements on the Republican side.

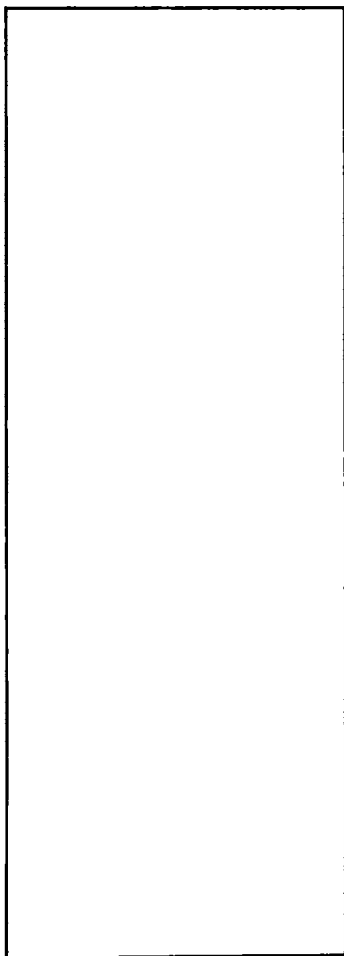
The history of the Communist Opposition in India is inextricably associated with one man, M. N. Roy. The founder of the Communist Party of India and a top official of the Comintern, Roy was also the founder of the Opposition Communist Party. When he broke with the International Communist Opposition, that movement ceased to have any representation in India. However, Roy and his followers continued to play an active, although secondary, role in Indian politics for some years.

The Pre-Communist Career of M. N. Roy

M. N. Roy was born Narendra Nath Bhattacharya sometime between 1886 and 1893. A Brahmin, he grew up in the Bengali village of Arbalia, twenty miles from Calcutta. As a teenager he was already involved in nationalist activity.¹ He was connected with the "Howrah Conspiracy" in 1910, and authorities disagree as to whether he was acquitted or sent to jail as a result of this involvement.²

Young Bhattacharya's Indian nationalism brought him to oppose Indian participation in World War I. As the result of involvement in an unsuccessful plot for an uprising in Bengal with

M. N. Roy and the Indian Communist Opposition



arms to be supplied by the Germans, Bhattacharya fled in June 1915 to Japan, where he got a visa for entry into the United States.³ He landed in San Francisco on June 15, 1916. He spent some time around Stanford University, made contact with Indian revolutionaries there, and met and subsequently married a graduate student, Evelyn Trent, who was his wife until they separated in 1926. At Stanford, Narendra Nath Bhattacharya took the name M. N. Roy, by which he was to be known for the rest of his life.

Roy soon went to New York, where he attended some Socialist Party meetings and was said to have read Karl Marx for the first time in the New York Public Library. In June 1917 with the United States now in the First World War, he was indicted for allegedly entering the United States illegally. He and his wife went to Mexico City.⁴ In Mexico the Roys lived relatively well on money from German sources. They established contacts with high officials of the Carranza regime, as well as with the fledgling Mexican Socialist Party, of which Roy soon emerged as one of the principal leaders. It consisted to a large extent of foreigners, including a number of Americans who had fled the draft.

When Michael Borodin, a prominent Russian Bolshevik leader, arrived in Mexico in June 1919 with the purpose of making that country the Western Hemisphere center of the Communist International, he sought out the Mexican Socialist Party and was soon living with the Roys. They had very long discussions, and Borodin educated Roy on Hegelian and Marxist philosophy and converted him to Communism.⁵ Subsequently Roy was to say that he regarded Borodin as one of his "gurus," the other being the German Communist Opposition leader, August Thalheimer.

Meanwhile the Mexican Socialist Party split, one faction being led by Lynn Gale, a U.S. draft evader, the other, by Roy. Both took the name Communist Party of Mexico, and sought recognition as the official Mexican affiliate of the Communist International.⁶

M. N. Roy and Lenin

Roy left Mexico in 1920 to go to Moscow as delegate of the Mexican Communists to the Second Congress of the Communist International. Certainly due to the influence of Borodin, his group obtained official recognition as the Mexican section of the Comintern.

The moving spirit in the CI's Second Congress was Lenin. During the congress he apparently developed a very high opinion of the young Indian nationalist recently converted to Communism. B. R. Nanda has noted that Roy "impressed Lenin as one of the best representatives of colonial revolutionism, and was catapulted into the councils of the Communist International."⁷ Lenin was particularly impressed by Roy's comments on a draft resolution on national and colonial issues he submitted to the congress. As a

result Lenin invited Roy to submit an alternative resolution. Both were formally accepted by the congress.⁸

The positions of Lenin and Roy were markedly different at this time. Sankar Ghose has summed them up thus:

Roy, the erstwhile extremist and militant nationalist, advocated that the communists in colonial and semi-colonial countries, should pursue a militant uncompromising policy. Whereas Lenin considered that in the early stages of the national liberation movement in colonial and semi-colonial countries they should work in cooperation and not in conflict, with the national bourgeoisie who sought freedom, M. N. Roy was distrustful of the role of the national bourgeoisie altogether. Further . . . Lenin considered that Gandhi was playing a progressive role in the conditions prevailing in India, but Roy regarded Gandhi as a purely medievalist reactionary. This approach of Roy, to some extent colored the thinking of the Indian communists in the early stages.⁹

Haithcox has noted the historical significance of the Lenin-Roy debate at the Second Congress of the Comintern: ". . . the Roy-Lenin debate . . . marks the first attempt within the Comintern to formulate a policy which would successfully merge the revolutionary aspirations of nationalist anti-colonialism and communist anticapitalism. Disagreement over the degree of support to be given nationalist leaders as opposed to indigenous communist parties has continued to plague the international communist movement to the present day."¹⁰

The differences with Roy at the Second Congress did not reduce Lenin's regard for the young Indian. As a result, instead of returning to Mexico, whose Communist Party he had ostensibly represented at the Moscow meeting, Roy remained in the Soviet capital and was named to the Central Asiatic Bureau of the Communist International. His fellow members were Sokolnikov, chairman of the Turkestan Commission of the Soviet government, and Safarov, a member of the central committee of the Soviet Party.¹¹

Roy's Efforts to Establish an Indian Communist Party

M. N. Roy was chosen by the Comintern to try to get a Communist Party organized in India. In November 1920 a party-in-exile was set up in the Soviet Union, with Mohammed Shafiq as general secretary, and with M. N. Roy and his wife Evelyn, Abani Murkherji and his wife Rosa, Musood Ali Shah, Abdur Rab, Triumul Acharia, Shankat Usmani and Abdallah Safdur among its founders.¹² Roy also entered into contact with people in India who were sympathetic to the Comintern, including S. A. Dange, who in later years became a leading figure in the Indian Communist Party. However, Roy's first major effort to launch an Indian C.P. had almost a comic opera quality about it.

As a result of the peace treaty imposed on Turkey by the Allies at the end of World War I, widely regarded by good Moslems as an insult to the caliph, the head of all Islam, thousands of Moslems left India in 1920 seeking to get to Turkey to help fight for the caliph. Some went to Soviet Central Asia, just recently taken over by the Bolsheviks. These were given the alternative of going on to Turkey or staying in Tashkent to form an army to invade India. About half of the group stayed in Tashkent. It was with them that Roy first tried to work to build the core of an Indian Communist Party. Vijay Sen Buderaaj has commented on this adventure:

Roy wanted to prepare himself for a direct, armed confrontation with the British rule in India. The plan appears to be romantically adventurous, an army of liberation, composed of religious fanatics and mercenary tribesmen, led by a Marxist and supported by some dismantled aeroplanes... marching through the Khyber Pass, believing that the mighty, well-equipped, well-trained and well-organized British army would be demoralized by revolutionary programs and propaganda leaflets and hoping that the masses in India would rise in revolt as soon as they heard of the establishment of a revolutionary government.¹³

Even for the euphoric revolutionary atmosphere of 1919-1920, this effort was too much. The Afghan government proved unwilling to allow the Indian "revolutionary army" to pass through its territory, and the Soviet government itself soon had doubts, since it was trying to get the British to sign a trade agreement.¹⁴ The Third Congress of the Comintern decided to end the whole affair. It was agreed that the Central Asian Bureau would be abolished, "the communist parties in the imperialist countries should be directed through the Comintern to establish contacts with and help the revolutionary movements in their respective colonies," and the Comintern would establish a training school for Asian revolutionaries, whose activities would be directed by an eastern section of the Comintern. Finally, it was agreed that "M. N. Roy should establish contact with India and influence events therein from Western Europe."¹⁵

In April 1922 Roy arrived in Berlin, where he was to spend several years. He was supplied with substantial funds by the Communist International, and much of this money went to publishing a bimonthly periodical.¹⁶ This appeared in English and changed its name various times. It was first called *The Vanguard of Indian Independence*, later was changed to *Advance Guard*, and still later to *Vanguard*. The periodical was sent to India with the help of Indian seamen and was circulated among friends and sympathizers of the Comintern. Overstreet and Windmiller have noted that "*Vanguard* was a great success and boosted Roy's prestige both in India and in Moscow."¹⁷ Roy was also occasionally able to get articles placed in a Calcutta newspaper *Averita Bazar Patrika*, the editors of which were sympathetic to his ideas.¹⁸ He likewise published articles from time to time in the Comintern periodical *International Press Correspondence* (*Imprecor*).

From his Berlin headquarters Roy sent envoys to India. Vijay Sen Buderaj has noted that "Some success was achieved... for a number of groups were established in places like Bombay, Calcutta, Kampur, Lahore and Madras."¹⁹ The leaders of the local Indian Communist groups in contact with Roy included S. A. Dange in Bombay, Muazaffar Ahmed in Calcutta, M. S. Chettiar in Madras, Ghulam Hussain in Lahore and Shankat Usmani in the United Provinces.²⁰ The most important group was in Bombay, where S. A. Dange had won support of a wealthy industrialist, who financed publication of a number of Marxist classics and other Communist works.²¹ Dange took over a Marathi language daily, *Indepakash*, and in August 1922 began to publish an English weekly, *Socialist*.²²

As early as August 1922 Roy asked the Communist Party of Great Britain to send two Britishers to India, in conformity with the instructions of the Third Comintern Congress. Roy agreed to pay their expenses. However, the CPGB supplied only one person at that time, Charles Ashleigh, who was arrested and deported back to Britain soon after his arrival in September 1922.²³

Overstreet and Windmiller have concluded that "By the fall of 1922 M. N. Roy could justifiably claim that a foothold for communism had been established in India. . . . Recognizing this, the government of India began to intensify its efforts to suppress all Communist activity."²⁴

In 1923 an effort was made by some of Roy's contacts to call the first All-India Congress of Communists, and formally to establish the Communist Party of India. However, elements opposed to Roy's influence mounted a parallel attempt, and the upshot was that the All-India Congress was not held.²⁵ But in 1925 a national conference in Kampur did establish an All-India Communist Party. It was marked by a controversy over whether the organization should affiliate to the Comintern. Those favoring affiliation won out. The party then established "consisted of those recruited by Roy or had come from Tashkent."²⁶ Another national conference of Indian Communists took place in Bombay in May 1927. There, too, there was controversy over international affiliation, but it was generally supported by those present.²⁷

Roy and the Congress Party

M. N. Roy's attitude towards the Indian National Congress Party, the principal Indian nationalist movement, led by Mahatma Gandhi, changed from time to time during the period he was the principal spokesman for Indian Communism. We have noted that in 1920 Roy characterized Gandhi as a "medievalist." However, he sought to get his Indian contacts to work with C. R. Das, one of the more radical followers of Gandhi. Das headed the so-called "Vanguard" group within the congress. It submitted a program to the 1923 congress session calling for abolition of large landlordism, nationalization of public utilities, reduction of land rents, a graduated income tax, industrial

profit-sharing, and the eight hour day. Das's group got considerable publicity in the Indian and British press.²⁸ However, when Das became president of the Congress Party, Roy became disillusioned with him, since he made no move to break with Gandhi. Das also became disillusioned with Roy, because of the latter's emphasis on the need for revolutionary violence to obtain independence.²⁹

Roy once again changed his tactics: "Preparations were set afoot in 1923 for organizing a Workers' and Peasants' Party. In a message sent by the Executive Committee of the Communist International to the projected Workers' and Peasants' Party it was stated: 'It is clear that the workers and peasants on whose shoulders fall the greatest part of imperialist exploitation, can no longer remain an adjunct to bourgeois nationalism to act or keep quiet at its bidding... the working class must come forward as an independent political force and take up the leadership.'"³⁰ For several years Roy continued to advocate establishment of workers' and peasants' parties in various provinces. He urged, as late as December 1927, in a letter to the Indian Communist Party that "... the Workers' and Peasants' Party should not, in the public mind, be associated with the communists, or the Communist Party for, in that event, the fear of communism might repel many leftist and democratic elements who could otherwise have been induced to join the Workers' and Peasants' Party."³¹

The British treated the Indian Communists with considerable severity. British intelligence kept close track of Roy's contacts with his Indian colleagues. From time to time Communists were jailed, and visiting English Communists were arrested and deported. The high point of British persecution of the Communists was the so-called "Cawnpore Conspiracy." Eight Indian Communists were indicted for having "entered into a conspiracy to establish throughout British India a branch of a revolutionary organization known as the Communist International with the object of depriving the King of the Sovereignty of British India." Four of those who were in custody were tried and convicted, while Roy continued to be under indictment as part of this "conspiracy" as long as he remained abroad.³²

M. N. Roy and the Comintern

Throughout the 1920s, M. N. Roy rose high in the councils of the Communist International. At the Comintern Fourth Congress in 1922, he was named a candidate member of the executive committee of the Communist International and soon afterwards became a full member. In June 1923 he was elected to the Presidium of the CI.³³ At the Sixth Plenum of the ECCI in February and March of 1926 Roy was once again elected to the Presidium, as well as being made chairman of the eastern commission of the CI executive. Soon after the Seventh Plenum, Roy joined the political secretariat of the ECCI when that body was formed by merger of the Orgburo and the Secretariat. Haithcox has com-

mented that "Thus, by the end of 1926, Roy had attained membership on all four of the official policy-making bodies of the Comintern—the Presidium, the Political Secretariat, the ECCI and the World Congress."³⁴ Roy, as well as his wife Evelyn, contributed frequently to *International Press Correspondence*, and other publications of the Communist International during the 1920s.

However, Roy was not always in full agreement with positions of the International, particularly concerning colonial and semicolonial countries. At the Fourth Congress in 1922 Roy argued that in India the bourgeoisie no longer represented a revolutionary force. However "Roy failed to convince the Comintern that his analysis was correct. The thesis on the Eastern Question, as finally adopted, stated that the Communist International 'supports all national revolutionary movements against imperialism.'"³⁵ The Fifth Congress in 1924 passed a resolution urging establishment of direct relations between the Comintern and the Indian National Congress Party, although Roy had urged the CI to concentrate its efforts on bringing into existence an effective Communist Party in India.³⁶ However, as Overstreet and Windmiller have noted, "though the Comintern did not accept his arguments, it continued to support his leadership of the Indian movement."³⁷

M. N. Roy in China

Roy was a member of the sizable group of Comintern and Soviet functionaries active in China in the mid-1920s. During his stay in China he became embroiled in a controversy with his old friend and mentor, Michael Borodin, and his performance there probably contributed to ending his career as a Comintern leader.

Borodin and several other Soviet officials, including General Vassili Blucher, had been in China for some years before Roy's arrival. They had worked with the Chinese Communist Party and the Kuomintang in establishing a dissident government in Canton, organizing the armed forces of that government, and setting up extensive labor and peasant movements both within the territory controlled by the Kuomintang and in areas still dominated by warlords and the official Chinese government.

Roy was sent to China by the Comintern after the Seventh Plenum of the ECCI in November and December of 1926, as a member of a delegation which included the American, Earl Browder; the Britisher Tom Mann; the Frenchman, Jacques Doriot; and the Russian, Sydor Stoler.³⁸ They arrived in China at a critical moment. In April 1927, about the time of their arrival, Chiang Kai-shek, leader of the Kuomintang army which had conquered the Yangtze Valley area, turned on the Communists, massacring thousands of them, and had established his own government in Nanking. More leftist members of Kuomintang, headed by Wang Ching-wei, continued to run the government the Kuomintang had earlier established in Hankow (Wuhan) and continued to

cooperate with the Communists. They sought to outflank Chiang Kai-shek by mounting a military campaign in the northern provinces of China proper, thus isolating Chiang in the eastern central part of the country. It was this campaign which first divided the Comintern representatives and Chinese Communist leaders.

M. N. Roy argued that the military drive to the north should not be undertaken until the peasant and worker revolution in the area controlled by the Wuhan government had been consolidated. He said that "such a policy... would force the resignation of the more reactionary of the military and political leaders in Wuhan and smooth the way to the goal of capturing the nationalist organization."³⁹ Michael Borodin was the principal spokesman for the group opposed to Roy's position. Haithcox has noted that Borodin felt that if Roy's line was followed "what would be left would not be worth capturing."⁴⁰

The Chinese Communist Party at first supported the position of Roy, but at its Fifth Congress on April 27, 1927, tried to develop a compromise position.⁴¹ The Eighth Plenum of the ECCI, meeting at the same time, also sought a compromise. The resolution it passed "called for supporting Wuhan's military ventures and preserving the alliance with the Left Kuomintang on the one hand, and creating a mass base through the support of peasant demands and the arming of peasants, on the other hand. Under the circumstances, these were contradictory goals."⁴²

M. N. Roy finally appealed to Moscow. A reply from Stalin was received in Hankow on June 1, 1927. This telegram, "like the resolution of the Eighth Plenum of the ECCI and the Fifth Congress of the CCP... tried to reconcile the irreconcilable by striking a balance between the views of Roy and Borodin. The Chinese Communists were advised to support Tang's military offensive and, at the same time, to develop the revolution in the territories of the Wuhan government. Both Roy and Borodin knew that this was not possible."⁴³

This controversy proved to be beside the point. The Wuhan government soon collapsed, and Chiang Kai-shek came to control all the territory dominated by the Kuomintang. It was he that finally conducted the military campaign which captured Peking and consolidated the Kuomintang regime, based on Nanking as the official Chinese government.

M. N. Roy returned to Moscow in September 1927.⁴⁴

Roy's Break with the Comintern

Once back in Moscow, M. N. Roy must have quickly become aware that he was in trouble within the Comintern. He was in particular difficulty with Stalin, whose domination was growing rapidly. Roy sought an interview with Stalin to explain his behavior in China, but Stalin refused to see him, in spite of Roy's request being backed by R. Palme Dutt, Clemens Dutt, and Hugh Rathbone, all of the British Communist Party, and also by Borodin.⁴⁵ Furthermore, upon

his return Roy was confronted with charges by Saunyendranath Tagore, recently arrived from India, that he had misused money given to him by the Comintern for work with the Indian Communists. Although no formal charges were ever brought against Roy by the Comintern, there is reason to believe that Piatnitsky, head of the Org Bureau of the ECCI, and Stalin's right-hand man in the Comintern apparatus, used the charges to undermine Roy's position.⁴⁶

As is always the case in internecine Communist struggles, there were issues of theory and differences on tactics involved in Roy's growing difficulties with the Comintern leadership. At the Seventh Plenum of the ECCI at the end of 1926, Roy had developed his own theoretical analysis of what was transpiring in India. He argued that the days of "classic imperialism" were over, insofar as Great Britain was concerned, because the British were no longer in a position to export capital on a large scale. As a result, "in the more advanced parts of the colonies, such as India," the British were forced increasingly to depend on "inner capital resources." Roy added that Britain hoped "that by keeping the entire capitalist structure under the financial domination of London, it will be able to utilize the available capital resources of the colonies, to help British capital." However, in the longer run this would not work: "the little child that Britain is nursing may begin to kick before very long." As a result, concluded Roy, Britain would not be able to maintain political control over India, when it was no longer able to keep economic and financial control.⁴⁷ Bukharin, the chairman of the Comintern, used the word "decolonization" to describe the phenomenon Roy had described. Both men were to find this word turned into a banner for use against them by their enemies.

Upon return from China Roy was asked by Bukharin to prepare a draft statement for the preparatory colonial commission of the Sixth Congress of the Comintern, scheduled to meet several months later. In that document Roy himself used the word "decolonization" to describe the process of industrialization of India, and predicted that India would soon be granted dominion status. However, he argued that this would only favor the Indian bourgeoisie, and reached the tactical conclusion that "it was necessary to unite all progressive forces... to capture the leadership of the Congress party."⁴⁸

Roy's position was strongly attacked by Eugene Varga, a Hungarian Communist resident in Moscow closely allied to Stalin, at the Ninth Plenum of the ECCI in February 1928. Varga presented a thesis arguing that the British were now trying to stop further Indian economic development. His position was adopted by the Plenum, and the whole March 1928 issue of *Imprecor* was devoted to an article by Varga on the subject.⁴⁹

The battle over the issues raised by Roy was renewed at the Sixth Congress of the Comintern, although Roy was not there. Otto Kuusinen, a Stalinist, presented the official ECCI position, endorsing Vargas's point of view, and denouncing Roy and R. Palme Dutt and Hugh Rathbone of the British party for their insistence on the possibility of "decolonization" within the British Empire. The British delegation was particularly vigorous in attacking Kuusin-

en's report and in supporting the "decolonization" thesis. A "compromise" resolution was finally adopted by the congress: "The resolution on colonial policy reflected an uneasy compromise between those who, like Stalin, wished to make a pronounced shift to the left, and those who, like Bukharin, wanted to avoid a drastic change in policy."⁵⁰

Meanwhile Roy was being increasingly isolated by the Stalinists in the Comintern. He was not allowed to speak at the Ninth Plenum of the ECCI in February 1928. When he developed an ear infection, he was not taken to the hospital in the Kremlin where Comintern officials were usually treated, but to a small one outside of Moscow. After the Plenum, Piatnitsky refused to give Roy his passports so that he could return to Berlin, and he was only able to receive them when Bukharin intervened. He got to Berlin in April 1928 and went straight from there to St. Moritz to recover from his illness. There he wrote a book on China.⁵¹

Roy continued to be attacked by Comintern officials. Kuusinen ridiculed Roy's fears that the new extremist line of the Comintern after the Sixth Congress would alienate valuable allies of the Communists in India. Alexander Lozovsky, head of the Red International of Labor Unions, blamed Roy for Communist weakness in the Indian labor movement, and accused him of being a Menshevik, adding that the ECCI must help the Indian party in "purging it from every variety of overt and covert Mensheviks."⁵²

Roy's growing alienation from the Stalinist-controlled Comintern was reinforced by his association with the Communist Opposition. Soon after his return to Berlin, Roy established relations with the Brandler-Thalheimer group and came to very much admire August Thalheimer, whom he ultimately came to classify with Borodin as one of his two "gurus," or teachers.⁵³ Roy began to contribute articles to the publication of the Communist Opposition of Germany.⁵⁴ He also entered into contact with Oppositionist elements from other countries. Ben Gitlow noted that he, Lovestone, and Max Bedacht met with Roy in 1929 on their way to Moscow to defend themselves before the Tenth Plenum of the ECCI. Gitlow remarked that "He told us his story. The account of his experience should have been a warning to us."⁵⁵

At the Tenth Plenum of the ECCI in July 1929, the same one at which Jay Lovestone and his supporters made their last-ditch stand to remain as leaders of the Communist Party of the United States, M. N. Roy's ideological position was completely repudiated.⁵⁶ He was finally expelled from the Comintern in September 1929. The official announcement read in part: "In accordance with the resolution of the Tenth Plenum of the ECCI...and the decisions of the ECCI of 19 December 1929, according to which adherents of the Brandler organization cannot be members of the Communist International, the Presidium of the ECCI declares that Roy, by contributing to the Brandler press and supporting the Brandler organization, has placed himself outside of the ranks of the Communist International and is to be considered as expelled from the Communist International."⁵⁷

The expulsion of M. N. Roy was part of the general purge by Stalin of those who had been aligned with Bukharin. Haithcox commented on the coincidental evolution of the ideas of Bukharin and Roy during the 1920s that at the beginning of the decade they were both in the left of the Comintern leadership, then "both Bukharin and Roy modified their views considerably in the mid-1920's, so that when Stalin adopted a middle position in 1926-27, they represented for this brief period, the dominant viewpoint in the Comintern.... Both Bukharin and Roy continued to modify their views in response to external changes, so that after Stalin veered to the left in 1927, they found themselves, for the first time, in the right wing of the communist movement."⁵⁸

Ben Gitlow has claimed that "Roy... was never on good terms with Bukharin. They disagreed on too many important questions."⁵⁹ However, the evidence would seem to indicate that their ideas tended to coincide over a considerable number of years, and that on the issue which mattered most to Roy, the Comintern's attitude towards India, Bukharin supported Roy. Also, there can be little doubt that Stalin regarded Roy as a "Bukharinite."⁶⁰

Organization of an Indian Communist Opposition

Expelled from the Comintern, Roy set about working to establish an Opposition group in India. He first set up the group of Oppositionist Indian Communists in Berlin. Among its members were Tayab Ali Shaikh, who remained Roy's main lieutenant during the 1930s; Brajash Singh, who returned to the official Communist Party a couple of years later, and later still was the common-law husband of Svetlana Aliluyeva (Stalin); and Dr. Amadi Bhaduri.⁶¹ In August 1930 Roy sent Tayab Shaikh, Brajash Singh, Sundar Kabadi and Dr. Amadi Bhaduri back to India.⁶² They took with them a manifesto by Roy which said in part:

The Communist Party cannot advocate that India will immediately be a Soviet Republic. That will be running after a Utopia. The Soviet State is the organ of the dictatorship of the proletariat. The conditions in India are not at all ripe for such a State.... The workers becoming class conscious cannot be expected to join the Communist Party if it is organized only with a maximum program which appears to have little relation to prevailing conditions. They must be shown that the solution of the problems actually before them, concerning the minimum demands of the toiling masses, come within the purview of the Communist Party. There is no other way to free an essentially revolutionary movement for national independence from the leadership of the bourgeoisie. In India, they work through the national mass organizations—the National Congress, Youth League, student organizations and volunteer corps.⁶³

Roy was convinced that the leadership of the Communist Party of India was inept and that if he could go to India and organize a more efficient party, Stalin would accept it into the Comintern. However, many friends urged him not to return, because he was still under indictment in connection with the Cawnpore

Conspiracy. Brandler in particular insisted that Roy's return would be "premature."⁶⁴

In spite of the advice of his European friends, M. N. Roy returned to India in December 1930, on a forged passport under the name of Dr. Mahmud. He first arrived in Karachi and went from there to Bombay, arriving there on December 17.⁶⁵ For about seven months Roy was able to keep out of the hands of the police by using various disguises. Haithcox has noted that "During the brief seven months at his disposal, he had gained many supporters for his view—including important Congressmen—in various parts of the country." A police report on Roy's activities commented that he had been able to do "very considerable mischief, despite the fact that the police were continually hot on his heels." This same report noted that "Roy, ever the realist, stands out heads and shoulders above all other Indian communist leaders... and his continuous exhortations to 'eschew the dangerous ultra-left policy,' would have won more converts to communism 'in the end' than the CPI's sectarian policies." Haithcox has said that Roy's arrest removed from the political arena "a dangerous enemy of capitalism, landlordism and imperialism and... struck another blow at Indian communism in general."⁶⁶

Although no national Opposition Communist Party was organized until several years after Roy's arrest, groups of Opposition Communists worked within the Indian National Congress Party, where they formed the Committee of Action for Independence of India, later renamed the League of Indian Independence. It was organized largely through the efforts of Tayab Ali Shaikh.⁶⁷ The largest Royist group in the Congress was in Calcutta, with thirty-five members. There were others in Bombay, Ahmadabad, "and several other locations."⁶⁸ The league issued a periodical, *Independent India*, of which Charles Mascarenhas was editor.⁶⁹ The league was ultimately dissolved "on the principle that the division of Congressmen into separate parties would weaken the nationalist organization,"⁷⁰ although this by no means meant that the Royists abandoned work within the Indian National Congress Party.

During this period Roy recognized the fact that his group would remain only a small minority within the congress. However, he thought "that it would successfully carry out his plan of action if its members were welded together into a tightly-knit organization capable of providing sufficient controls to ensure ideological integrity and unity of purpose." With this in mind, he worked for establishment of a "broad-based party of the proletariat, peasantry and petty bourgeoisie" within the congress, and a smaller more tightly-knit and secret group which would function outside of the Congress Party. Haithcox has noted that this "was a modified version of his earlier call for the formation of an open workers' and peasants' party and an underground communist party."⁷¹

During the months before his arrest, Roy encouraged the establishment of a constituent assembly. He thought of it in terms of the French Jacobin experience, where the Jacobins had controlled the convention through the committee of public safety and a network of Jacobin clubs. He foresaw a network of

local groups of the Indian National Congress selecting the members of the constituent assembly and his group infiltrating and capturing local organizations of the congress.⁷²

Roy's work in building an Opposition Communist Party was facilitated by the weakness and division of the official party. In an article in the German Communist Opposition paper *Gegen den Strom* in February 1931 he dismissed the official party as of little importance, having functioning groups only in Bombay and Calcutta. He claimed that it consisted largely of students and "functioned more as a student group than anything else." He noted that the official party's influence in the labor movement was declining and that it had no influence among the peasants.⁷³ Roy's judgment was confirmed many years later by S. K. Pramanik, a member of the Roy group in the 1930s but later a leader of the Communist dominated All India Trade Union Congress, who wrote in June 1945 that in 1930-31 "the leadership of the C.P.I. passed into the hands of an immature and inexperienced group of young Communists, mostly fresh from college. They began to follow more than ever an ultra-left and adventurist line of action."⁷⁴

Roy and Nehru

Roy attended the February 1931 meeting of the Indian National Congress on the invitation of Jawaharlal Nehru.⁷⁵ There were also several other Royists at this session. They opposed an agreement Gandhi had recently made with the viceroy, Lord Irwin, to call off civil disobedience and take part in the Second Round Table Conference in London. For a while Nehru worked with the Royists on this issue but ended up endorsing Gandhi's position, which was supported overwhelmingly by congress delegates. The Royists and Nehru worked for adoption of a resolution on fundamental rights and the national economic program. This "provided for state ownership of key industries and transport and included important provisions in the areas of labor rights and agrarian reform."⁷⁶ The original draft supported by Nehru and Roy was greatly modified, so Roy ended up labelling it "an instrument of deception" which was really a "retreat from the path of revolution."⁷⁷

After the congressional session Roy accompanied Nehru on a tour of the United Provinces, where there was a great deal of peasant unrest. During the months of March, April, and May they were able to organize many new congress branches in the rural areas,⁷⁸ and Roy "was one of the guiding forces behind the Central Peasants League, an organization which worked closely with the Congress party and whose efforts met with considerable success in various parts of the province." The Indian government was sufficiently worried by this activity that they ordered a reduction of rural rents. But when Roy and left-wing congress people called a rent strike, the government cracked down and jailed Nehru and the president of the Congress Party organization in the United Provinces.⁷⁹

During his work in the United Provinces, Roy became aware of the fact that the police were on his trail. He later claimed that the official Communists had informed on him, denouncing him as a "renegade" who had used "Bolshevik gold" for his personal purposes.⁸⁰

Roy's Arrest and Trial

M. N. Roy was finally arrested on July 21, 1931. He was brought to trial in January 1932 and was sentenced to deportation to a penal colony for twenty years.⁸¹ Roy's arrest, trial, and subsequent treatment in prison were made a cause célèbre by the International Communist Opposition. Articles appeared in periodicals of ICO affiliates in various countries. One appeared in *Workers Age* in New York City on January 30, 1932, written by Ajoy Kumar Ghosh, then a leader of the Roy group and in the late 1940s leader of the left-wing faction of the Communist Party of India. Ghosh charged that Roy, being held in the Cawnpore prison where his trial was taking place, was unable to confer with his attorney and was kept from receiving newspapers or any books from abroad. Nehru had been refused permission to see Roy, and Roy had not been allowed to send telegrams of protest to British Prime Minister MacDonald or to Gandhi, who was then in London. Finally, Ghosh reported that Roy's defense was being organized by the Trade Union Congress and the "Committee for the Revolutionary Working Class Party of India."

Brajash Singh first undertook to prepare Roy's appeal from his sentence, but just before he was to appear in court he defected to the official Communist Party and returned to Europe. As a result Roy was unable to get a lawyer to present his appeal, which was rejected on May 2, 1933, by Justice Thom of the Alahabad High Court. However, Justice Thom cut Roy's sentence to six years of imprisonment.⁸²

Opposition Communists in various countries attempted to rally support for Roy. Jay Lovestone wrote Roger Baldwin, head of the American Civil Liberties Union, in May 1934, saying that "The pressure of Indian public opinion is very low at the present moment. I have therefore to request you to agitate on his behalf over here. That alone will have some effect."⁸³

Roy was not released until November 29, 1936. During those years he was able to maintain close contact with his supporters, as the result of the complicity of some of his jailers who were nationalist sympathizers.⁸⁴ Roy was also able to get three books published while he was incarcerated.⁸⁵

Activity and Ideas of the Indian Communist Opposition

The jailing of M. N. Roy undoubtedly seriously hurt the Communist Opposition. Roy was the group's principal theoretician and had a degree of popularity the other Opposition Communist leaders did not possess. How-

ever, the removal of Roy did not kill the Communist Opposition. Somewhat optimistically, *Workers Age* reported on June 4, 1932, that "The Indian Communist Opposition, which has developed as the driving force not only in the reconstruction of the Indian Communist movement but also in the leadership of the All Indian Trade Union Congress, in the National Congress left wing, and in the revolutionary peasant movement, has now recovered, at least to a large extent, from the serious blow involved in the arrest and imprisonment for twelve years at hard labor of Manahendra Nath Roy. The Indian Communist Opposition is again moving forward with great rapidity in all fields of work."

After Roy's arrest, efforts continued to organize the Communist Opposition as a nationwide party. An article in *Workers Age* on December 15, 1932, noted that "We shall soon come out as an All-India organization—that is, the All India Communist Party or the Revolutionary Party of the Indian Working Class (RPIWC). The draft program has been circulated for acceptance and is now in print and will be available for the members and various groups in the country." However, it was not until 1934 that the various Opposition Communist regional groups were formally brought together in a single organization. The meeting was organized on instructions of Roy, and delegates attended from Bombay, Calcutta, Baroda, Benares, Poona, "and a few other places." They established the Revolutionary Party of the Indian Working Class. Roy is reported to have specifically opposed adoption of the name Communist Party (Opposition).⁸⁶

The Oppositionists had various publications which appeared during the 1930s, including *Masses*, a Calcutta publication patterned after the one Roy had published in Berlin; *Roy's Weekly* in Bombay; *Workers Age*, a weekly in Calcutta; *Sranjibi (Labor)*, a Bengali paper in Calcutta. In addition, articles by Roy, Sundar Kabadi, Tayab Shaikh and other Communist Oppositionists appeared in periodicals which were not controlled by the group.⁸⁷

The Oppositionists continued to engage in polemics with the official Communists. An article from Bombay in the New York *Workers Age* on December 15, 1932, noted that "There is a big controversy about tactics, methods and program of the C.P. between ourselves and the remnants of the official line." The Oppositionists also engaged in some electoral activity. It is not clear whether they worked within the Congress Party or independently in these efforts. However, an article datelined Bombay in the *Workers Age* of March 23, 1935, noted that one Communist Oppositionist had been recently elected to the Bombay City Council.

Communist Oppositionists in the Labor Movement

The Royists had considerable influence in organized labor throughout the 1930s. Their principal objectives were to make the labor movement a partner

in the Indian nationalist struggle and to bring about unity within the ranks of the unions. M. N. Roy had no illusions that the labor movement could immediately be an instrument of revolution. He noted later that "strikes in India were the manifestations of an 'elementary revolt' against intolerable living conditions rather than of 'revolutionary class-consciousness.' There were very few workers, he argued, who understood 'the rudimentary ideas of class struggle' or were 'consciously inclined toward Communism.'"⁸⁸

At the time of the founding of the Communist Opposition in India, the official party had extensive influence in the still small organized labor movement. However, the Royists were aided by the extremism of the CPI, and particularly by the violent opposition of the official Communists to the congress. The Royists worked within the congress labor committee, and thus formed an alliance against the official Communists with the Nationalists. In October 1930 the Royists were able to capture control of the GKU textile union in Bombay, one of the strongest labor organizations of the time, with the active cooperation of G. L. Kandalkar, the congressman who was president of the union. Two months later they also won control of the Bombay Dockworkers' Union, and made substantial gains in the G.I.P. Railwaymen's Union.⁸⁹

In July 1931 a major battle took place between the Royist-Congress allies and the official Communists at the convention of the All India Trade Union Congress (AITUC). This meeting had been postponed from February because of unwillingness of official Communist trade unionists to hold it at the earlier date. Before the AITUC meeting, the Royist Committee for the Organization of a Revolutionary Party of the Indian Working Class issued a pamphlet which accused the official Communists of "weakening the labor movement" and demanding that the delegates "remove the delinquents from office." It also called for reunification of the AITUC and the dissident Indian Trade Union Federation (ITUF), controlled by political moderates.⁹⁰

In the meeting of the executive committee of the AITUC before the convention which served as its credentials committee, the Communists objected to seating delegates from the GKU and the Railwaymen's Union. When they were defeated on the issue, they withdrew their delegates, and set up their own Red Trade Union Congress. Haithcox has said of this group that "The Red TUC never became a significant force in the Indian trade union movement. Not once in its three-year existence were audited accounts or membership figures of its constituent unions made public."⁹¹

When the AITUC congress finally met, there were thirty unions represented. Two Royist sympathizers were elected vice presidents of the organization and Royist Tayab Shaikh became one of its four secretaries. Haithcox has commented that "The Royists and the nationalists, aided by the inexperience and errors of the communists themselves, had accomplished their aim of breaking the CPI's control over India's largest trade union federation."⁹²

After the split of the CPI with the AITUC, the Royists put major emphasis on trying to bring about unification of the All India group with the ITUF. Roy drew up a platform of unity "in which he defined a union as an organ of class struggle, set forth a minimum program of economic and political demands, and pledged the trade union movement to support the Nationalist struggle." Haithcox has noted that "This document, under the sponsorship of the Royist GKU, was to serve as a focus of unity efforts in the next several years."⁹³

The AITUC's Twelfth Annual Meeting in Madras in September 1932 received a message from Roy urging acceptance of his platform of unity "as the basis of unity, developing and building up the labor movement of India." The Roy platform was unanimously endorsed, and Royist Rajani Mukherji was elected organizing secretary of the AITUC.⁹⁴ Subsequently, the Royists consolidated their position in the AITUC, while forty additional unions in Bombay, Calcutta, Madras, Nagpur, Assam, the United Provinces, Bihar, Orissa, and the Central Provinces joined it.⁹⁵

Meanwhile a number of independent unions, including the All-India Railway Workers Federation, formed a new body, the National Federation of Labor (NFL). In April 1933 it merged with the ITUF to form the National Trade Union Federation, with forty-seven unions and a membership of one hundred and thirty-five thousand. It was the largest labor group in India.⁹⁶

Several attempts to unite the various labor groups were made. The first unity meeting of the AITUC and ITUF in May 1931 proved fruitless. Presided over by a Royist, Jammadas Mehta, president of the All India Railway Workers Federation, its net result was to set up a seven-man committee, of whom two were Royists, to work further for unity.⁹⁷ At the end of 1931 a further conference was held. It endorsed Roy's platform of unity with modifications, and appointed a trade union unity committee.⁹⁸ A third unity conference in July 1932, attended by representatives of all major union groups, also endorsed Roy's unity platform as the basis for discussions, but broke up over disagreement on international affiliation. Representatives of the ITUF wanted the unified group to belong to the International Federation of Trade Unions, of which the ITUF was an affiliate; the AITUC representatives opposed this.⁹⁹

In 1935 the Red TUC dissolved, in conformity with the change in line of the Communist International, and its unions joined the AITUC. In the same year the All-India Joint Labor Board, with equal numbers of members from the AITUC and the ITUF, was set up. However, final merger of the two groups did not take place until April 1938.¹⁰⁰

Communist Opposition and the Congress Socialist Party

The Congress Socialist Party (CSP) had been formed as a reaction of more left-wing Congress Party leaders to Gandhi's agreement in May 1935 to call

off the civil disobedience campaign started in 1932, and to participate in elections. The CSP had at least three factions in its leadership, which Haithcox has labelled Marxist, democratic Socialist, and Gandhian.¹⁰¹ The leading figure among the Marxists was Jayaprakesh Narayan, who said that he first got acquainted with Marxism reading Roy's works while a student in the United States.¹⁰² He was predisposed to work with Roy and his followers, and did so for several years.

The Communist Oppositionists soon achieved leading positions in the CSP. Charles Mascarenhas was elected to its twenty-one-member national executive¹⁰³ Rajani Mukherji became secretary general of the Bengal CSP, which had a Royist majority in its provincial committee. In December 1936 Mukherji was elected a member of the national executive. Among prominent Royists in the Bombay Congress Socialist Party were: Maniben Kara, secretary of the AITUC in 1936; R. A. Khedgikar, vice president of the AITUC in 1937 and a member of the Bombay Legislative Assembly between 1937-39; and Dr. M. R. Shetty, founder of the Bombay Transport and Dock Workers Union. Royists were also in the leadership of the CSP in Gujarat, Maharashtra, Punjab, and Sind.¹⁰⁴

The Royists were important in determining CSP policy. They got the first CSP conference to endorse M. N. Roy's idea of a constituent assembly. During World War II, by which time the CSP leaders were sworn enemies of the Royists, a report of the CSP noted that "there seems little doubt that the Congress Socialist Party . . . was considerably influenced by Roy's program. . . . It has been said that both the Royists and the Communists tried to influence the Congress program and that the Royists won."¹⁰⁵

However, in spite of close cooperation of the Communist Oppositionists with the Congress Socialist Party, they basically regarded it as "petty-bourgeois." Roy's idea in having his members join the CSP was "not of merging with it, but of splitting it and absorbing the 'real proletarian elements' " of the Congress Socialists.¹⁰⁶ Although Roy assured CSP leaders, particularly Narayan, that he did not intend to split the Socialists, the Opposition Communists began issuing statements critical of the CSP soon after Roy's release from jail. A meeting of the Royists in New Delhi in March 1937 decided to begin to have their members withdraw from the CSP in small groups "in order to create the impression of a collapse of the party."¹⁰⁷

The Congress Socialists soon began to retaliate by expelling Royists, and "as a result of these maneuvers Roy and his group earned the undying enmity of the socialists. Narayan felt that Roy had acted in bad faith, and that his behavior had constituted a betrayal of the socialist cause." Narayan commented later that "After more than a year and a half of close cooperation our Royist friends left us with a parting kick."¹⁰⁸

Roy's decision to disrupt the CSP was not without opposition in his own ranks. Haithcox has concluded that the fact that the official Communists, who also entered the CSP and stayed until they were expelled in 1940, grew

while the Royists were declining, "is testimony to the foresight of those Royists such as V. M. Tarkunde, Rajani Mukherji and A. K. Pillai, who had warned that such a move not only would weaken the nationalist left wing, but also condemn their group to virtual isolation within the Congress."¹⁰⁹

There were several factors which motivated Roy's break with the CSP. Aside from his feeling that the CSP was predominantly a petty-bourgeois group, he thought they erred in putting too great emphasis on the immediacy of their socialist goal. Soon after leaving prison Roy claimed that "socialism or communism is not the issue of the day, and socialists and communists should realize that the immediate objective is national independence."¹¹⁰ Jayaprakash Narayan offered still another explanation:

The basic difficulty in the path of unity was the ridiculous idea held by every miserable little party that it alone was the real Marxist Party, and that every other party had therefore to be exploited, captured or destroyed. The Roy Group was also a votary of this inflated creed. It was natural for it therefore to consider the development of another socialist party as unnecessary and harmful.¹¹¹

The Break with the International Communist Opposition

With the change in Comintern line in 1934-35, Roy felt that the new policy corresponded with his, and he wrote Moscow seeking reincorporation into the Comintern. Haithcox has noted that "He contended that there were no longer any differences between himself and orthodox communists on the question of colonial policy." However, Stalin ignored his requests for readmission to the orthodox Communist movement. The Comintern continued to denounce Roy's ideas as "Social Democratic."¹¹²

Nevertheless, the shift in Comintern policy served to alienate Roy from the International Communist Opposition. He became increasingly critical of the intensification of the ICO's rejection of Stalin after 1936. Before then, in spite of the long distances involved, Roy had kept in more or less close touch with the ICO. For instance, in a letter to *Workers Age* dated July 14, 1933, he declared his "complete agreement with the policy of the Buro of the International Communist Opposition and with the attitude of the Communist Party of Germany (Opposition) to the German events." *Workers Age* went on to report that "He takes a firm position against Trotskyism and centrism and against the whole 'new' party and 'new' international conception." Roy wrote that "I agree entirely with the political conduct of Thalheimer and Brandler and I am for the maintenance of this attitude under all circumstances."¹¹³

However, Roy did not share the ICO's growing revulsion against Stalin. In 1936 he wrote the ICO that he was still a "personal admirer" of Stalin, "who used to pride over our racial affinity, and called me 'gold.' Now he won't appreciate me even as copper! But I have the weakness of giving the devil his due. And in my account his due is very considerable."¹¹⁴ Although Roy was

often critical of Stalin and his policies in the Soviet Union as well as abroad in the late 1930s, he could never break completely with the Soviet boss. Jay Lovestone once commented that "Roy was a most loyal Stalinist. In many ways Stalin had a terrific hold on him. For years after our expulsion, I differed violently with Roy because of his attitude towards Stalin."¹¹⁵

Even at the time of Stalin's death early in 1953, when Roy had long ceased to consider himself a Communist of any kind, he wrote that Stalin had been "the most maligned man of our time," and added that "No great man has ever been an angel. Greatness is always purchased at the cost of goodness. Stalin... was undoubtedly the tallest personality of our time, and as such is bound to leave his mark on history."¹¹⁶

The growing divergence of Roy's ideas from those of most of the ICO leadership finally led to a break with the Communist Opposition. Roy continued to contribute to publications of the Opposition through 1937. Thereafter he ceased all association with the ICO.¹¹⁷ Soon afterwards, he moved entirely away from Communism.

The Later Career of M. N. Roy

In 1939 M. N. Roy organized a new group within the Congress Party, the League of Radical Congressmen. It had as its avowed purpose "combatting the Gandhian ideology" and reviving "the historic banner of Jacobinism." Roy said that its program was one of "national democratic revolution."¹¹⁸ However, evolution of Roy's philosophy did not gain him additional influence in the congress. At its session in 1940 Roy ran for president of congress, but was defeated by Maulana Abdul Khan by 1,854 votes to 183. Both the CSP and CPI delegates at the meeting voted against Roy.¹¹⁹

Sankar Ghose has noted that with the onset of the war, Roy "considered that it was an international civil war in which the forces of democracy and fascism were ranged against each other. Roy supported the war effort against Germany. After the fall of France, Roy pleaded that unconditional support should be lent to the Allies so that the Allies may score a decisive victory over fascism."¹²⁰ This position led Roy inevitably into open conflict with the Congress Party. At the March 1940 session of Congress it resolved that everyone who held office in Congress had to sign a nonviolent civil disobedience pledge. The Royists refused, and they were forced out of influential positions in Congress. The stand of the League of Radical Congressmen was confirmed at a conference of the group in May and June of 1940, although a minority, led by V. M. Tarkunde, urged cooperation with the civil disobedience campaign.

The final break with Congress came in October 1940, when the central executive committee of the League of Radical Congressmen declared membership in congress "incompatible with antifascist conviction," and voted to

set up a new party, the Radical Democratic People's Party. It had its inaugural conference in Bombay in December 1940, with 109 delegates representing thirty-five hundred members.¹²¹

In November 1941 Roy called an All India Antifascist Labor Conference, including Royists and some independents, which formed the Indian Federation of Labor, a breakaway from the All India Trade Union Congress. The Indian Federation of Labor reported to the founding congress of the World Federation of Trade Unions late in 1945 that it had 408,000 members.¹²² However, this was undoubtedly an exaggeration. S. K. Pramanik wrote of the IFL that its "real membership is very small and influence very negligible, particularly because, subsidized by the Indian Government, it has thoroughly discredited itself, and by its anti-Congress and proimperialist policy has cut itself adrift from the main currents of progressive Indian movements."¹²³ The IFL finally merged in 1948 with a Socialist-controlled group to form the Hind Mazdoor Sabha.¹²⁴

Roy's ideas continued to move further away from Marxism-Leninism. Sankar Ghose has noted that between 1940 and 1947 "Roy considered himself a Radical and not an orthodox Marxist."¹²⁵ The final step in the political evolution of Roy and his followers was taken at the Fourth All India Conference of the Radical Democratic Party in December 1948. Two years before the party had adopted "a system of philosophy known since then as the philosophy of New Humanism or Scientific or Integral Humanism. During the subsequent two years they endeavored to concretize these ideas in their personal lives and cooperative social activities. The draft before the 1948 Conference . . . was an attempt to integrate into a statement the conclusions derived from the experience of the last two years."¹²⁶

Five different proposals were put before the conference, ranging from maintaining the name and structure of the Radical Democratic Party, through various changes in name and structure, to dissolution of the party. As Roy's paper *Independent India* reported the final outcome, "It was unanimously decided to dissolve the R.D.P. and to form a comprehensive cultural political movement to be described as the Radical Humanist Movement."¹²⁷

Ghose has indicated that "As a Radical Humanist, Roy's philosophical approach was individualistic. The individual should not be subordinated either to a nation or to a class. Roy rejected both the nationalism of Congressmen and the theory of class struggle of the communists. He said: 'Radicalism thinks in terms neither of nation nor of class; it conceives of freedom as freedom of the individual.'"¹²⁸ The antiparty position the Royists adopted after 1948 was clearly stated in a leaflet issued by Roy's paper, *The Radical Humanist*:

The end of the party system is the condition for purifying politics. Because, in the absence of parties scrambling for power, politics can be immune to corruption and evil

practices. On the basis of these general propositions, a new political theory can be formulated, and the Constitution of a new type of State devised, under which power will remain vested in the people, who will directly control the State and actively participate in the government of the country. Such a State alone will be a truly democratic State, the political organization of a free society.¹²⁹

M. N. Roy continued to publish *The Radical Humanist* until his death in 1954. By that time, however, his influence on Indian politics had virtually disappeared.

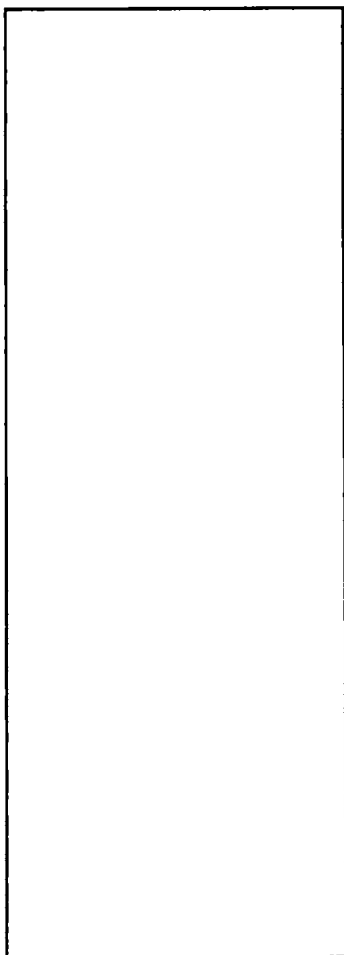
The German, United States, Swedish, Spanish, and Indian groups affiliated or associated with the International Communist Opposition were its most important components. The Swiss Party was of particular interest because of the case of Jules Humbert-Droz. However, in addition to these there were various other national organizations which belonged to the International Communist Opposition.

Origins of the CPO in Canada

The Communist Party of Canada in the 1920s was largely composed of immigrants. It had a Finnish Federation and a Ukrainian Federation, and most national leaders were people from Great Britain. There were also quite a few Jews in the membership, including Michael Bushay, a leader in Montreal, who had gotten his start in the Jewish labor and radical movement in London.

At the time of the emergence of the Right Opposition, the Canadian party was already divided into warring factions. At its convention in June 1929, the group headed by Jack MacDonald, party chairman, and Michael Bushay, was in a majority. However, *Revolutionary Age*

Other National Opposition Communist Groups



claimed that "because of their conciliatory and passive policy, the actual hegemony rested with the former CC minority (Smith-Buck)." Although the so-called "New Course" of the Comintern was endorsed by the convention, the MacDonald-Bushay group kept their majority in the new central committee "because it was absolutely impossible to find enough of the others to fill up the CC." The same article noted that Finnish Federation members "have taken up the struggle" against the new Comintern line, and the Finns had sent a delegation to Moscow to try to convince the Comintern leadership "to stop the operation of the destructive new line in Canada." The article concluded, "It is time that the foundations were laid for a clear and conscious Communist Opposition movement in Canada."¹

Events, in fact, were moving towards that end. In Montreal, Israel Breslow, a young Communist member of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers who had refused to quit that union to join the Communists' new Needle Trades Workers Industrial Union, had begun to receive the information bulletin in English of the Brandler-Thalheimer group. He found that its ideas conformed with his own, particularly the argument that each national party should be free to determine its own policies in conformity with the circumstances of its country.

The Montreal party leadership complained to the national leaders in Toronto about Breslow's receiving the KPO publication. National Chairman MacDonald and central committee member William Moriarity refused to take action against Breslow, and Moriarity even informed him that he too had certain sympathy for the arguments of the Brandler-Thalheimer group. Breslow thereupon went to Toronto, where for three days he discussed the situation within the Canadian party and the International with Moriarity.

Meanwhile Breslow had received a copy of the first issue of the Lovestoneite paper, *Revolutionary Age*, and wrote a letter to the paper, indicating support of its position, but suggesting that the letter not be printed. It was printed, signed with the initials "I.B." It was not difficult for the Canadian Communists to figure out who "I.B." was.

Some time afterwards Breslow had his first personal contact with Lovestone. He was visited one evening by a somewhat elegant lady, wife of a major contributor to the Communist Party. She told Breslow someone was in town whom she would like him to meet. So he accompanied her back to her home, where he met a blonde man, rather tall, who introduced himself, saying "Comrade Breslow, I'm Jay Lovestone." A long conversation confirmed Breslow's sympathy for the Opposition.²

The purge of Canadian Oppositionists finally came in March 1930. Those thrown out by the Executive Committee of the Comintern included William Moriarity; Peel, a labor veteran and former editor of the party paper; and Shoosmith, delegate to the Fourth Congress of the Red International of Labor Unions. Jack MacDonald was suspended and his expulsion recommended to

the next Plenum of the party. The ECCI also expelled a number of leading members of the Finnish Federation, and steps were taken to expel at least five more central committee members.³

The Montreal Opposition Group

Those expelled also included Israel Breslow and Michael Bushay of Montreal. In addition to being an active trade unionist, Breslow was also an editor of the party's Yiddish language paper *Kampf*, while Bushay was the most respected figure among the Jewish Communists of the Montreal area. Breslow and Bushay set up in Montreal what was to be one of the two principal Opposition groups in Canada. They established a Workers Education League, which began to organize classes along the lines of the New Workers School in New York. Bushay was one of the lecturers, and Breslow gave a course on the history of the three internationals. The Workers Education League remained a permanent activity of the CPO in Montreal.

Most of the people who joined the Montreal group were former Communist Party members. They also recruited some people who had never been Communists, including Kalmen Kaplansky, who was to succeed to leadership of the Montreal group when Breslow moved to New York City in 1935.

Trade union activities, public meetings, and some electoral work were the principal functions of the Montreal Communist Oppositionists. They were active in the cloakmakers' strike of the International Ladies Garment Workers Union early in 1933 and in the local organization of the United Garment Workers.⁴ In addition, Breslow wrote most of the propaganda leaflets local railroad workers unions used in an organizing campaign.⁵

Kalmen Kaplansky's recollection was that the Montreal group "consisted... mostly of young people with no trade union connections." He added that "I was its only trade union member,"⁶ which at least so long as Israel Breslow was there was not literally true. However, it is clear that the CPO in Montreal was not a major political factor in the labor movement. Nevertheless, such trade-union contracts as they had were sometimes of considerable use to the Montreal Oppositionists. For instance, although *Workers Age* carried a short note on a meeting by Lovestone in Montreal in January 1933 which was a "tremendous success," it did not tell the role which a group of workers had played in assuring this success.⁷ When arrangements for the Lovestone meeting had first been announced, the official Communists proclaimed that they would break it up. Breslow then turned to his railroad union friends, who provided him with twenty-five to thirty large railroad unionists to "police" the meeting. Consequently no effort was made to break it up.⁸

Although the Montreal Oppositionists never ran their own candidates, they were active in electoral politics, through the Quebec Labor Party, in which Kalmen Kaplansky was a member of the executive committee. When the

eleven-year-old Liberal provincial government of Prime Minister Taschereau fell in mid-1936, the Quebec Labor Party offered candidates in some constituencies, and the Communist Oppositionists played a part in that campaign. However, there was considerable juggling among various left-wing groups. The official Communists proposed that there be a united front of the Labor Party, Communist Party, and socialist Cooperative Commonwealth Federation. Kaplansky, knowing this was impossible, proposed that the three groups not run candidates in the same districts, and this suggestion was adopted.

There was a particular problem in the St. Louis riding, a heavily Jewish constituency, where the Zionist Labor group Poale Zion, which belonged to the Labor Party, wanted to support the Liberal candidate, Peter Bercovitch, against the Communist nominee, Fred Rose. So they sought to get the Labor Party to run a candidate against Rose, and in two successive meetings of the executive of the Labor Party won support for this. The Communist Oppositionists were opposed, and also were against suggesting to the official Communists to withdraw Rose's candidacy. However, they were defeated on the issue. It was finally decided that the Labor Party would not endorse any nominee in the constituency—a compromise Kalmen Kaplansky accepted on behalf of the Oppositionists.⁹

The Montreal branch of the Communist Opposition existed for almost a decade. Kalmen Kaplansky has written that "The group did not break up, it just ceased to exist in 1939."¹⁰

The Communist Opposition in the Toronto Area

The second center of the Canadian Communist Opposition was in the area around Toronto and Hamilton, Ontario, where William Moriarity, one-time first secretary of the Canadian Communist Party, was the principal leader. The Ontario Communist Oppositionists were active in organized labor and in organizing the unemployed. On at least one occasion, in 1936, an Ontario Oppositionist was a delegate to the convention of the Trade and Labor Congress (TLC) of Canada, and *Workers Age* boasted that "it was left for a delegate who is a member of the C.P.O. to state clearly the position of the trade unions on political activity." This article also noted that "it was gratifying to see the attempt at collaboration between C.P., C.C.F., C.P.O., Left Poale Zion and generally progressive delegates."¹¹

Work among the unemployed was carried on both in Hamilton and East York. In the former city the Communists had first organized the unemployed in 1930, before expulsion of the Opposition. The unemployed workers' leaders, Patterson and Flattman, were among those expelled, and the former joined the CPO. The Hamilton unemployed group supported moves for united political action by Communists, a local Labor Party, and the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation, in local elections.¹²

In the East York Workers Association, the unemployed organization in that town, the Communist Opposition formed a Progressive group in 1936 to fight Arthur Williams who, on the basis of work among the unemployed, had been elected mayor of East York, and had then cut down on relief. Williams received support of the official Communists, who succeeded in getting all known Oppositionists expelled from the East York Workers Association.

The Ontario Communist Oppositionists were also active within the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation, the Socialist party organized in the early 1930s. William Moriarity was a delegate to the 1932 convention of the CCF. He led a fight to get the party committed to "violent change," as well as to confiscation of private property and support of political prisoners in a number of countries.¹³ The Communist Oppositionists were involved several years later in a struggle of four local CCF organizations in Ontario, which were expelled from the CCF for participation in a united front May Day parade. The groups were finally reinstated and *Workers Age* reported that "The correct approach was indicated by the CPO throughout the struggle."¹⁴

In 1936 William Moriarity died at only forty-five years of age. At that time the secretary of the International Communist Opposition, Heinrich Brandler, wrote the Canadian Oppositionists that "We have retained a very vivid memory of the discussion we had with him two years ago. Our conference with him convinced us that William Moriarity was an extraordinarily devoted comrade. . . . Though he did not attempt to conceal the difficulties of building our group in Canada, we were convinced that he would make all efforts to do everything humanly possible. He kept his promise. He laid the foundations for our group in Canada."¹⁵

Although the Ontario element of the Canadian Opposition continued for at least three years after Moriarity's death, its activities were reduced. As late as April 1939 the Toronto group published a pamphlet exposing the Leadership League as "a semi-fascist creation of the Toronto Globe and Mail," and was conducting a class in current economic problems. There were at this time still youth groups of the Opposition in East York and Humber Bay.¹⁶ A month later *Workers Age* noted that a second pamphlet had been issued by the Toronto comrades, entitled "If War Comes Who Will Be Responsible?"¹⁷ However, like its Montreal counterpart, the Ontario organization of the Communist Opposition did not survive the outbreak of World War II.

The Relations of the Canadian Opposition to Lovestoneites

The Canadian Communist Opposition was in practice a satellite of the Lovestoneites in the United States. Representatives from the Montreal and Ontario groups regularly attended national meetings of the Lovestoneites.¹⁸ The Canadian groups had no regular publications of their own and presumably circulated *Revolutionary Age* and *Workers Age*.

Nor did the Canadian Oppositionists have any lasting national organization. The only indication of a group bringing together all Canadian adherents of the ICO was announcement early in 1934 of the formation of the Canadian Workers League. *Workers Age* greeted its birth with a lead editorial which commented. "This League is dedicated to the principles of Marx and Lenin, and to the Leninist tactical course pursued by the Comintern in its days of greatest virility and influence." It noted that "The Workers League of Canada breaks with the dry-rot formulas and shibboleths of the ultra-left sectarian course of official Canadian communism."¹⁹

The optimism reflected in this editorial did not reflect the realities of the Canadian Communist Opposition. Its best epitaph is given by Kalmen Kaplansky: "The small size of the group made it futile to act as an active unity—it simply did not seem relevant to the Canadian scene."²⁰

The Communist Opposition in Great Britain

The history of the Communist Opposition in Great Britain involves two distinct phases. During the first, in the early and middle 1930s the Communist Oppositionists worked within the Independent Labor Party (ILP), seeking to convert it into a group aligned with the position of the International Communist Opposition. The second phase, 1938-1940, saw a close alliance between the leadership of the ILP, which the Communist Oppositionists had formerly strongly opposed, and one element in the International Communist Opposition; and strong disagreements within the ICO about the nature of relations with the ILP.

The Communist Opposition in Great Britain did not form a cohesive political group until the mid 1930s. Until then, although sympathizers with the line of the ICO worked together within the Independent Labor Party, they did not have a formal organization. Even after establishment of a formal Communist Opposition, they remained a very small group.

Early Activities of British Oppositionists in ILP

The purge of Bukharinites and opponents of the line Stalin imposed on the Comintern in 1929 did not have the repercussions in the British Communist Party it had in several other countries. There were no massive expulsions and there was no consequent immediate establishment of a Communist Opposition.

There were those in the British Communist Party who were against the new line of the Comintern. They included Arthur Horner, principal Communist figure in the Miners Federation, who at first strongly opposed the dual union concept, as well as two nontrade unionist leaders, Rothstein and Bell. All three were removed from the central committee of the Communist Party early

in 1930. At that time *Revolutionary Age* commented that "The rise of an organized opposition in the CPGB to fight openly against the present ultra-left line is only a matter of time."²¹ However, *Revolutionary Age* was mistaken. Unlike the situation in many other countries, the opponents of the new Comintern line in Great Britain either made their peace with the Stalinists or were expelled individually and did not set up an Opposition group.

However, the split in the Comintern was not totally without its impact in Great Britain. A number of people who were sympathetic with the position of the International Communist Opposition worked within the Independent Labor Party (ILP). The ILP, which had been part of the British Labor Party since the organization of the latter in 1901, withdrew from the BLP after the collapse of the Labor Party government of J. Ramsey MacDonald in 1931. The ILP considered itself to the left of the Labor Party but for several years was divided over what ideological position and affiliation it should adopt.

There were two principal currents within the ILP. One, led by Fenner Brockway, James Maxton, and John McNair, controlled the party's National Administrative Committee. The other was the Revolutionary Policy Committee, to the left of the major party leaders. The Communist Party of the United States (Opposition), in its pamphlet *For Unity of the World Communist Movement*, noted "not only the difference between reformist and revolutionary socialism but also every tendency in the Communist movement finds some expression within the Independent Labor Party."²²

At the time of the Paris conference of "centrist" parties in 1933, "The left wing of the I.L.P. represented a position corresponding to that of the I.C.O.," according to the *International Bulletin of the Communist Opposition*. It went on to say that "On all decisive questions, this left wing accepts the position of Communism. It expresses the desire for unity with the Communist International and is against the formation of 'new' parties and a 'new' International."²³

Those influenced by the ideas of the ICO participated in the Revolutionary Policy Committee. The CPO of the United States in a resolution of its national council in July 1934, noted that "In England we have succeeded in winning a base of influence through enhancing the revolutionary clarity of the R.P.C. in the I.L.P., to the point of substantial agreement by the R.P.C. with the principles and tactical line of the I.C.O."²⁴ Jay Lovestone reported to the same meeting that the ICO had been "forging a possible base in England."²⁵

Although the sympathizers with the ICO were in the RPC within the ILP, the Lovestoneites of the United States sent a long letter to the National Administrative Committee of the ILP shortly before the 1934 ILP Convention. It started by proclaiming that "a complete break with social-reformism by the decisive majority of the Independent Labor Party would go a long way toward laying a sound and broad foundation for a vigorous communist movement in Great Britain."²⁶ The letter went on to welcome the ILP's objection to the Soviet Party's domination of the CI, warned against Trotsky's

idea of a new International, and set forth the ICO's general position on the Soviet Union. It ended saying that "We hope that the I.L.P., at its forthcoming National Conference will take steps towards adopting a position which will insure its becoming a powerful factor not only in the achievement of the unification of the Communist forces of Great Britain, but of the world Communist movement as well," and proclaimed that "The Communist Party of the United States (Opposition) is prepared to cooperate with you in a truly comradely fashion towards the achievement of this end."²⁷

Evelyn Lawrence, reporting in *Workers Age* on the 1934 ILP convention, noted that the RPC had pushed a resolution which was defeated, advocating that the ILP become a "sympathizing" member of the Comintern. A motion to have the party "associated with the International Revolutionary Parties with a view to influence them to work for the establishment of an inclusive revolutionary international" won by a vote of 102 to 64. Lawrence commented that the Revolutionary Policy Committee "alone is the force which is not swayed by sentimental attachment to the C.P. It alone is seeking revolutionary clarity and the crystallization of a steady Communist force. . . . They accept without reservation the principles of the C.I. and the C.P. and desire Communist unity. But they are dissatisfied with the tactics of the C.P. and therefore desire the maintenance of the I.L.P. in order to develop a revolutionary body with correct Communist tactics." However, she lamented that the RPC had not yet adopted "a clear program of action," and added that "Revolutionary clarity is the crying need of the I.L.P. Here the R.P.C. must be prepared to do much more."²⁸

In the following year Jim Cork, writing about the 1935 national convention of the ILP, noted that the RPC had suffered "a definite loss of strength since last year," and added that "one can't by any means speak of the R.P.C. as a national force," since its strength was concentrated in London. However, its members were "the most consistent attackers of the centrist policy of the N.A.C., the best defenders of the Soviet Union, the sharpest fighters for a turn towards the C.I. as the basic agency for world revolutionary unity (tho not withholding criticism where criticism was due)."²⁹

Formation of British CPO

Sometime after the 1935 convention of the ILP, an Opposition Communist Party was finally officially formed in Great Britain. A letter it sent to the national conference of the Lovestoneites in September 1936 said:

The English group of the C.P.O., the youngest group, sends hearty greetings to your conference. But for the hard work of the American comrades and the valuable assistance they have and are even now rendering, there still would not have been in existence in England a C.P.O. group. The official Party in Britain today is exhibiting all

of the worst features of the newly discovered opportunism of the C.I. At a time when the working class of Britain is once more exhibiting its militancy the C.P. is defending bourgeois democracy and the "vital interests of the British Empire," that are being threatened by Fascism.

We note with interest and approval your fight in America for the formation of a Labor Party based on the need for independent working class action and the severance of the trade unions from the deadly grasp of the Democratic and Republican parties. This fight that you are waging coincides with the increased demand in Britain for a reunification of the Labor Movement and the building of an effective united front to overthrow our National Government.³⁰

ILP-ICO Relations 1938-40

During the last three years of the International Communist Opposition, relations between the ICO and the Independent Labor Party altered fundamentally. Both groups participated in the Paris conference of February 1938 which established a loosely knit new International. Thus, in effect, the International Communist Opposition became a convert to the kind of "centrist" international group the majority of the ILP had been committed to since 1933.

In 1938 and 1940 there was extensive exchange of articles between the ILP periodicals and some of those of the ICO. *Workers Age* printed several pieces by Fenner Brockway on the position of the ILP and the left-wing international Socialist movement. The ILP and various Communist Opposition groups cooperated in fighting for the Partido Obrero de Unificación Marxista in Spain, in fact of its persecution by the Communists there. The ILP sent delegations to Spain to investigate treatment of the POUM, and its reports were published in periodicals of ICO affiliates.

The close relations of the ILP and some elements of the ICO were demonstrated during the ILP's summer school in 1938. Eve Dorf reported that the summer school indicated "how far the ILP has already developed in the direction of a stable, coherent and definitely revolutionary socialist party." She noted that Fenner Brockway had spoken very positively of the recent Paris conference as "signifying a consolidation of independent revolutionary forces with enormous promise for the future." He had said that one of the assets of the Paris meeting had been "the Independent Labor League of America, which he greeted most cordially and which he recognized to be a constructive force deeply rooted in the mass trade unions." Among the lecturers at the ILP summer school was the Lovestoneite, D. Benjamin.³¹

The attitude to be adopted towards the ILP was one factor bringing about a schism between the Lovestoneites and the German group of Brandler and Thalheimer. A letter dated December 19, 1938, from the executive committee of the Independent Labor League of America to the "leading committee" of the Communist Party of Germany (Opposition) observed that "It is obvious that we differ greatly in our attitude towards the I.L.P. For us, the I.L.P. is not

a field of operations in which we are to 'bore from within!' We look upon the I.L.P. as a brother party with which we desire to collaborate on the basis of mutual confidence and trust." It went on to say that "We have had and we still have some serious criticism of I.L.P. policy. . . . But we regard the I.L.P. as a revolutionary socialist party." Therefore, "we naturally do not agree with your method of 'working from below' to 'force' the leaders. Such a method is conceivable only in relation to leaders in whom we have no confidence whatever and to whom we are fundamentally hostile." The letter added that "Such is not our attitude towards the I.L.P. leadership, most emphatically not towards Fenner Brockway and the comrades standing with him."

The Americans chastised their German comrades further: "In one of your letters, you state that, while you believed you could go along with Brockway a certain distance, you have always felt that sooner or later a time would come when a break would be inevitable. We regard this whole approach as basically false." Furthermore, insofar as the Germans' talk about a left wing in the ILP was concerned, "There are elements that are more consistent revolutionary socialists and there are elements that are far less so. . . . But the 'left wing' is not to be simply identified with the so-called 'I.C.O. group' in the I.L.P. In this 'left wing,' as a political tendency, the comrades following the line of the I.C.O. would, of course, be included, but so also would Brockway, Bob Edwards, Aplin, McNair and others like them." The Lovestoneites concluded "we are opposed to the formation of any factions or groups in the I.L.P. . . . I.C.O. supporters like other left wingers, can do their best service by being active, conscientious and militant I.L.P.ers. We are as much opposed to sponsoring or fostering factional groups in the I.L.P. as we would resent any attempt on the part of the I.L.P. comrades to promote factional groups in our organization."³²

The French CPO

The 1929 purge of non-Stalinist elements from the Comintern was felt heavily in France in its early phases. By the end of 1929 the Communist mayors and city councillors of Clichy, Auffray, St. Denis, Pierrefite and Villeteneuse were expelled as "right wingers" and "renegades." In Paris three city councillors were also expelled, while Semard, the general secretary of the French Communist Party, and Vaillant-Couturier, editor of the party paper, *L'Humanité*, were removed from their posts. Although by no means all of these joined the Communist Party (Opposition), it was reported in November 1929 to be "consolidating itself."³³ It held its first national conference on October 27, 1929.³⁴

All those expelled from the French Communist Party ranks in 1929 did not adhere to the positions of the International Communist Opposition. *Revolutionary Age* noted the "unfortunate" decision of expelled opposition Commu-

nist councillors in Paris to form a new Workers and Farmers party, "directly contrary to the line and the experience of the International Opposition movement."³⁵

The French Communist Opposition remained in existence for more than half a decade, although it was a group of little weight in French left-wing politics. It remained loyal to the general line of the International Communist Opposition, and in the 1936 Popular Front election campaign it was reported that "The C.P.O. is endorsing the candidates of the C.P. but has brought forward its own position and has criticized the dangerous, opportunist tactics of the C.P. leadership."³⁶

The ICO and the PSOP

In the latter part of the 1930s the International Communist Opposition became closely associated with a group which had originated in the Socialist Party of France, the Workers and Peasants Socialist Party (PSOP). *Workers Age* reported that after the mid-1938 congress of the Socialist Party, "the Revolutionary Left decided to form a new party, the Workers and Peasants Socialist Party (PSOP). They did it not only because the expulsion of the Seine Federation had been confirmed by the congress, but above all because the decisions of the Congress meant that the French Socialist Party would continue and extend the policy of national unity." The article added that "This new party has issued a manifesto which contains a criticism of both the Socialist Party and the Stalinists and declares that the new party has but one aim—a socialist society; but one method—class struggle and revolution; but one banner—the Red Flag; but one song—the Internationale."

This article commented further that "The creation of a revolutionary proletarian party in France is not an easy task under present conditions. It was an act of high moral courage that the Revolutionary Left, despite all difficulties, decided to accomplish the organizational rupture with reformism. This rupture is a first but a decisive step on the way to the formation of that real revolutionary party, which the French working class needs so urgently and the lack of which has been felt so painfully during recent years."³⁷

Among those attending the founding congress of the PSOP as fraternal delegates was D. Benjamin of the U.S. Communist Opposition.³⁸

The PSOP was loyal to the line then held by the International Communist Opposition. It refused to support French entry into the Second World War. Its major leader, Marceau Pivert, wrote in *Workers Age* in September 1939 that "Neither the Russian people, nor the German people, nor the French people, nor the Spanish people, nor the great colonial peoples . . . have said their last word. . . . The international revolutionary vanguard will utilize the very contradictions of the regime for new possibilities of development and for new foundations on which to coordinate our fight." Pivert added, "Oppo-

sition to war is much greater among the ranks of the workers than is generally known."³⁹

In late December 1939 almost all the leaders of the PSOP was arrested.⁴⁰ Three months later seven PSOP leaders were prosecuted before the Second Military Tribunal of Paris for distributing pamphlets dangerous to national defense. Several were given five year jail terms, as well as fines and deprivation of political, civil, and family rights.⁴¹

The PSOP did not survive World War II.

The Alsatian CPO

In general, the French Communist Opposition took only a small part of the official party membership. However, in the Alsatian region virtually the whole Communist Party joined the Opposition. The first issue of *Revolutionary Age* explained the reasons for the purge of the Alsatian group from the French Communist Party: "The sources of this crisis are the *national question* and the *intolerable Party regime*. Thru a Leninist approach to the national question—which is naturally in the foreground in Alsace—the Alsatian Communists have succeeded in developing a substantial political force among the workers and peasants as well as a mass organization." The article added that "Suddenly, in line with the world wide revision of the principles of Leninism and of the traditional policies of the Comintern, a right-about-face was ordered in the national policy—the Leninist policy is to be replaced by a sterile sectarian 'nihilistic' attitude so often condemned by the Comintern." This brought "resistance by the Alsatian comrades who saw before them the prospect of the complete destruction of the hard won achievement of many years bringing with it a reign of terror, removals and expulsions—finally, the expulsion of the whole Alsatian Party."⁴²

Jacques Duclos, the long-time French Communist leader, gave a different version of these events: "Our party, opposed to the policy of brutal assimilation practiced in Alsace by French imperialism, defended the demands of a national character of the people of Alsace-Lorraine. But in the ranks of the Alsatian communists were opportunist elements, who engaged in a policy of alliance with the clerical autonomist movement. Hueber, mayor of Strasbourg thanks to the support of clerical reaction, and excluded from the party, founded with deputy Mourer the 'Communist Opposition Party' (KPO), but the majority of the communist organization of Alsace-Lorraine lined up against that treason."⁴³

Obviously, Duclos, ignored completely the Comintern's change of policy in 1929 which provoked the split of the Alsatian Communists. He also completely misrepresented the relative strength of the dissident and official Communists in Alsace, as is clear from subsequent election statistics. Finally, he confused the position of the Alsatian Communist Oppositionists at the time

they were thrown out of the French Communist Party with their evolution five years later.

At the time of their expulsion, the Alsatian Oppositionists published a daily paper in Strasbourg, *Nie Neue Welt*. They also controlled the municipal government of Strasbourg.⁴⁴

The founding conference of the Alsatian Communist Opposition took place on October 27, 1929. A report on the general French situation was given by Fournier from Paris, and a report on the situation in Alsace was offered by J. P. Mourer, the party's member of the French Chamber of Deputies. Mayor Hueber of Strasbourg presented an organizational report, while August Thalheimer came from Berlin to talk about the situation in the Communist International. The meeting unanimously adopted a Declaration of Principles and Program of Action.⁴⁵

The founding congress of the International Communist Opposition in December 1930 adopted a special resolution on "The Alsatian Question," the only document dealing with the problems of a particular country. This was drawn up by the Alsatian Committee of the conference, composed of Jay Lovestone of the United States, Nils Flyg of Sweden, Mandel of Switzerland, Schrockler of Alsace and Brandler and Frank of Germany. It began by saying that "In the national question the CPA (O) stands for the standpoint of the theses of the Second Congress of the C.I. These theses are in opposition to the current slogan of the official Party: Soviet Alsace." It goes on to explain that "The slogan of 'Soviet Alsace' means that the decision of the national character of the Soviet republic is already determined," whereas a Communist-controlled Alsace would join either a Soviet France or a Soviet Germany, depending on which was established first." The resolution then noted that "The official Party today rejects the support of national partial demands. The Communist Opposition on the contrary supports them, thus agreeing with the former tactics of the Communist International."

The ICO resolution urged the Alsatian party always to run its own candidates in first-round elections. If run-off elections were necessary, "Candidates of the anti-imperialist opposition are to be supported if they pledge themselves to a minimum program of daily demands of a social character corresponding to the concrete situation."⁴⁶ This passage was to prove of historical significance. The "anti-imperialist opposition" referred to consisted of the Alsatian autonomists. Relations with these groups were to be a major factor in the ultimate break of the Alsatian Oppositionists with the ICO.

The first electoral test of the Alsatian Communist Opposition came in municipal elections in late 1931. *Revolutionary Age* reported on the results:

In Strassburg-South, Mourer, the Communist Opposition candidate, was elected on the first ballot, with a majority of several hundred, over the Socialist Bohn, the joint candidate of the imperialist block.

In Strassburg-West the Communist Opposition candidate, Schrockler headed the poll with a vote of 1,601. The official Communist "Party" (a tiny sect) ran a rival candidate who got 476 votes. The Socialist, Koestler, obtained 1,483, and the candidate of the autonomists, Reibel, 1,348.

In Strassburg-East, the Communist Opposition candidate, Hengstler, received 1,340 votes, the Socialist, Weill, 1,918, and the autonomist, Roos, 1,831. The Communist candidate withdrew in favor of the autonomist in the second balloting.

In the country districts of Alsace great progress was also made by the Communist Opposition forces.⁴⁷

In election early in 1932 for the general council of Lower Alsace, there was a test of strength between the Oppositionists and the official Communists. The Oppositionists won a victory on the first ballot, with their candidate, J. P. Mourer, receiving 3,591 votes. The official Communists got only 409 votes. The CPO had gained 355 votes since the municipal poll the year before, the official Communists had lost 85 votes.⁴⁸

Like their counterparts elsewhere, the Alsatian Communist Oppositionists agitated for "reunification" with and reform of the official Communist movement. On February 18, 1933, a delegation of the Alsatian CPO met with a group from the official party "to discuss the possibility of a united fighting front of revolutionary organizations." The Oppositionists expressed support for such a front, but said that organic unity of the two groups would be possible only as part of unity on an international scale. They said that "The Comintern must make a radical and decisive turn in the sense of the reestablishment of inner-party democracy, the readmittance of those expelled in a most dictatorial fashion from the International, the removal of the functionaries especially responsible for the ultra-left excesses, and the abolition of the bureaucratic [sic] regime."⁴⁹

A convention of the Alsace CPO at the end of the 1933 discussed the party's attitude towards the regional autonomist group known as the People's Front (Volksfront), as well as "the struggle against the capitalist offensive," and the struggle against war and fascism. It paid special attention to the struggle against the official Communists' dual unionism line.⁵⁰ It sent a letter to a forthcoming conference of the Communist Party (Opposition) of the United States, which expressed the position of the Alsatian Oppositionists at that time:

Tremendous tasks are facing the Communist Party Opposition of Alsace-Lorraine, engaged in the struggle against the attacks of capitalism, of fascism and the imperialist war danger. The French social-democracy is preparing the way for these criminal aims. It is first among the war propagandists; it supports the attacks of capitalism and it sabotages the proletarian united front. The Communist Party of France has completely isolated itself from the masses . . . it is without any influence whatsoever and persists despite constant failure in its sectarian policy, which makes any real united front impossible.

The Communist Party Opposition of Alsace-Lorraine is, at the same time, the champion of all Alsatian workers, petty bourgeois people, and peasants culturally oppressed in their fight for national emancipation. The Communist Party Opposition of Alsace-Lorraine is in control of the municipal government of Strasbourg. It is utilizing its parliamentary position as much as possible for the protection of the working masses against the attacks of capitalism. At the same time, it combined those tasks with its efforts for the creation of a proletarian defense front, for the establishment of trade union unity and the defeat of the ultra-left course of the Communist Party of France.⁵¹

The Split of Alsatian Oppositionists with the ICO

In 1934 the Communist Opposition of Alsace split, and most of the party left the International Communist Opposition, as a result both of actions of the CPO's deputy in the French parliament, J. P. Mourer, and the general political evolution of the Alsatian Communist Opposition. Late in 1933 Mourer failed to vote against the government of Prime Minister Sarraut. At first his action was condemned by a party membership meeting, although the meeting voted against his immediate expulsion. *Workers Age* reported that "Mourer's line was sharply condemned. No one endorsed it. He was given a severe warning that any further violation of the CPO line will entail his automatic expulsion from the ranks of the Communist Opposition."⁵²

However, divisive issues soon created a breach between the Alsatian CPO and the International Communist Opposition. A resolution of the National Committee of the CPO of the United States in July 1934 noted that "The National Committee unreservedly condemns the action of Mourer and the CPO of Alsace in voting for the Doumergue government in the French Chamber of Deputies." It added that "We greet the numerous deliberate efforts of the ICO to win over the CPO of Alsace to a correct position in the coming municipal election campaign in Strasbourg." The resolution then went on to spell out the basic political issue involved: "As against the policy of an election bloc with the nationalist Volksfront, constituent sections of which have gone Fascist, the CPO of Alsace should seek to develop the proletarian united front against French imperialism and Fascism. . . . In the truest comradely fashion we stress to our Alsatian comrades that it is impossible to carry out simultaneously an anti-Fascist proletarian united front policy and a coalition policy with the Volksfront parties which are going Fascist."⁵³

What had occurred was that the Communist Oppositionists, who had long had an autonomist line for Alsace, had aligned themselves increasingly with other autonomist elements which were coming under the influence of the Nazis after the advent of Hitler to power in Germany. August Thalheimer wrote in *Workers Age* early in 1935 that "A peculiar aspect of this new imperialist drive of the Nazis is in the plebiscite campaign started by the autonomists in Alsace-Lorraine and by the party led by Mayor Hueber,

recently expelled from the International Communist Opposition. It is clear that Goebbels and Hitler are secretly pulling the wires in this campaign."⁵⁴

Meanwhile elements in the Alsatian party still loyal to the ideas of the International Communist Opposition withdrew from the party. *Workers Age* reported in September 1934: "The position of the supporters of the International Communist Opposition has been strengthened to such an extent that the first issue of a weekly paper—'Arbeiter Politik' has already been published. The party supported the united proletarian front in France."⁵⁵

However, in spite of Thalheimer's optimism, there is no indication that those loyal to the ICO succeeded in maintaining a rival party once the Opposition Party of Alsace had left the International Communist Opposition.

The Austrian CPO

The Communist Party of Austria was only a tiny organization alongside the Social Democratic Party of Otto Bauer in the 1920s and early 1930s. The Austrian Opposition Communist Party was only a fraction of an already small fraction. It was established late in 1929 when the Politburo of the Austrian CP expelled Willi Schlamm, A. Reisinger, Joseph Klein and Richard Vovesny.⁵⁶ They had opposed "the extravagance of the ultra left adventurism of the official line," which in Austria involved raising the slogan of a general strike nine times within a year, "never with any results," and raising the slogan of formation of Soviets four times. By the end of 1929 the Communist Party (Opposition) was reported as "growing."⁵⁷ It had its own periodical *Der Neue Mahrruf*, identified as the "Organ of the Communist Right Opposition." This paper appeared from 1929 until the rise of the Dolfuss dictatorship early in 1934.⁵⁸

Very little attention was paid to the Austrian Communist Opposition in periodicals of the International Communist Opposition or its American affiliate. However, after the uprising of Social Democrats against the government of Chancellor Dolfuss in February 1934, Jay Lovestone commented: "The task of the CPO of Austria was to establish contact with the members of the Austrian Social Democratic Party moving towards Communism and to crystallize them as the base for the Austrian Communist movement in view of the bankruptcy of the official Communist Party of that country."⁵⁹

The Austrian Opposition Communists continued to exist until Hitler's conquest of the country in March 1938. Their last public pronouncement on February 20, 1938, shortly before the Nazi attack, said that they had issued a leaflet urging resistance to the forthcoming Nazi invasion and had "arranged a discussion with the Socialists on policy."⁶⁰

At the time of the Nazi invasion, Jay Lovestone went to Vienna to try to get out the principal leaders of the Communist Opposition. In later years he reminisced that his action reflected more recklessness than common sense. He

took in eight false passports and got out eight of the top leaders of the Austrian Opposition.⁶¹

For a few months thereafter, Willi Schlamm published a paper, *Weltbuehne*, for Austrian refugees in Czechoslovakia. Later Fenner Brockway noted that Schlamm's name was on a list the Czech Communist Party had submitted to the Czech war office, to be arrested if the Red army entered Czechoslovakia in conformity with the Franco-Russian and Franco-Czech defense treaties.⁶² Eventually Schlamm got to the United States where he quickly moved away from any Communist or even moderate leftist ideas. In the 1950s and 1960s, until his return to Europe to live in Germany, Schlamm was an editor of *National Review*, the magazine of William Buckley. Richard Vovesny returned to Austria after World War II and died there in 1973.⁶³ There is no indication of Vovesny's post-World War II political orientation.

The Hungarian CPO

The Communist Opposition in Hungary was not established until 1932. Then it was reported that it had taken with it about 10 percent of the underground Hungarian Communist Party. The article in *Workers Age* reporting the establishment of the Hungarian Opposition noted that "The differences in the C.P.H. out of which the Opposition movement emerged, arose in resistance to the dangerously sectarian policies and bureaucratic [sic] regime of the party; it did not take long, however, before the Hungarian comrades saw the international implications of their struggle and got in touch with the International Opposition."⁶⁴

Nothing more is known about the Hungarian Communist Opposition.

The Czechoslovakian Communist Opposition

The Czechoslovakian Communist Opposition started out as one of the most important such groups in any country. However, because of several splits it lost much of its constituency, and by the time of the Munich conference and the death of the first Czechoslovak Republic in the fall of 1938, it was of quite marginal influence in the country's politics.

The Czechoslovakian Communist Opposition was one of the first such groups to be established. The first issue of *Revolutionary Age* commented that "it is now almost a year since the old leadership of the party was expelled and the new 'left' leadership was installed."⁶⁵ The Opposition at its inception had substantial following in both the Slavic and German parts of the country. It also controlled the Communist-oriented trade union federation, the LAV.

The Second Congress of the Communist Opposition met in Prague in July 1930, attended by 53 delegates representing 110 local organizations. Another 15 delegates couldn't attend for lack of funds. The secretary of the

party, Berger, delivered the political report, "which became the basis for a thoro discussion." Heinrich Brandler, as a fraternal delegate of the German KPO, delivered greetings from his organization. Issues discussed included trade union unity, and relations with the so-called Brunner Opposition or Kovanda group.⁶⁶

Several groups in the Communist Party had originally resisted the "new course" of the Comintern, and had been expelled. The largest had been the group which formed the Communist Opposition, led by Muna, Jilek, Bolen, Hais and Neurath, which had six thousand "organized Communists," and controlled the LAV with forty thousand members. It had two publications, one in Czech, the other in German, and controlled "many workers houses and institutions." The two other opposition elements were the Leninist Opposition Group and the Brunner Opposition. A preliminary unity conference among the three groups was held in November 1929 and an agreement was reached which was accepted by the next Communist Opposition Plenum by eighteen to four.⁶⁷

However, the Brunner Opposition did not in fact merge with the Czechoslovakian Opposition Party, but rather moved in the direction of the Social Democrats. According to the *Revolutionary Age* report on the CPO Second Congress, "by the time the conference was held the relations between the Czech Opposition and the Kovanda group were practically broken; nevertheless Durian, the representative of the Brunner, was allowed to present his viewpoint, which was categorically and unanimously rejected by the conference."⁶⁸

The Czech Opposition worked for unity of the much-divided trade union movement. In the late 1920s there were at least fourteen separate national trade union centers. "Every party and every national group has its own federation," it was reported. One of these was the OSC, controlled by the Social Democrats, another the LAV, established by the Communists in 1922. The leaders of the latter joined the Czech Opposition when it was formed late in 1928. The official Communists then still further split the labor movement by taking elements under their influence out of the LAV to form what the Oppositionists labelled "spite unions."

The Oppositionists were committed to reunification of the labor movement. To that end, the LAV leadership negotiated a merger of the LAV with the OSC in mid-1930.⁶⁹

Decline of Czechoslovakian Opposition

Three factors brought about the decline of the Czechoslovakian Communist Opposition: split away of the Czech-speaking membership, defection of one of the group's principal leaders to the Trotskyites, and rise of Nazi influence in the German-speaking sections of the country between 1933 and 1938.

Workers Age reported on the defection of the Czech-speaking Oppositionists on December 1, 1933: "A bad blow to the International Communist Opposition and to the world Communist movement in general" was the decision of the Czech section of the CPO, led by Berger and Muna, to join the Social Democratic Party. It added that the Czech part of the CPO "practically broke with the International Opposition Center sometime ago, and was not represented at the recent International Conference."⁷⁰

After this split the Communist Opposition was almost completely confined to the German-speaking part of the country, the so-called Sudeten German region. However, even before defection of the Czech-speaking group, one of the most important German leaders, Alois Neurath, had left the Communist Opposition. A supporter of the Trotsky-Zinoviev bloc while still in the Communist Party, he wrote a letter to Brandler and Thalheimer early in 1932 which, it was reported, "quite definitely shows his relapse into Trotskyism . . . and sharply protests against the attacks of the German Opposition press on Trotsky." *Workers Age* noted that Neurath "has hitherto been the outstanding leader of the Czechoslovakian Opposition," but that the Opposition "doesn't share his views, and that he had been specifically repudiated by the Asch CPO organization, 'the decisive organization of the Czech Opposition in the German region.'"⁷¹

The fact that the Czechoslovakian Opposition was confined to the German region was particularly a handicap after the advent of the Nazis to power in Germany. Thereafter, the pro-Nazi Sudeten German Party, led by Konrad Henlein, carried on an intensive campaign, with increasing success, to polarize the German-speaking Czech citizens against the Czechs and Slovaks. The Communist Oppositionists, like all other parties of the area, were severely undermined. By the late 1930s their organization was largely confined to the city of Asch and its environs. However, the Communist Opposition continued to exist until after the Munich Conference. Early in 1938 it issued a call for a united front of the "proletarian organizations, the socialist parties, the Communist Party, the trade unions of all tendencies, the labor, cultural and sports organizations."⁷²

The CPO participated in the municipal elections of June 1938, the last held during the First Czechoslovakian Republic. The Henlein party got 73 percent of the total vote in the German areas. *Workers Age* reported that "our group put up candidates in a number of localities during the municipal election. In Neuenbrand we supported several social-democrats on our slate. In Wallgebeu we had a united slate of the C.P.O., the S.P. and the C.P. In Shoenbeck, one of our comrades was put on the C.P. slate."⁷³

With absorption of the Sudeten area by the Germans after the Munich Agreement, the Communist Opposition was destroyed along with all other anti-Nazi parties. The last notice of the Czechoslovakian Communist Opposition was a letter sent to the Independent Labor League of America, dated August 26, 1939, by a "Group of Emigre Functionaries of the former Commu-

nist Party (Opposition) of Czecho-Slovakia," and published in *Workers Age*.⁷⁴

The Dutch Communist Opposition

At the time of the general purge of supposed Bukharinites from the Comintern in 1928 and 1930, there was no Opposition group formed in the Netherlands. However, Franz Borkenau has noted that "In Holland a split had already occurred in 1927 and the most outstanding leaders of the party, Wynkoop and van Ravestein, had been excluded. Part of the dissidents returned after the policy had again been changed to the right." Borkenau adds, "but the Dutch Communist Party had no importance."⁷⁵

The Wynkoop group, which would have been the logical Netherlands affiliate of the International Communist Opposition, aligned itself instead with the centrists, who were seeking to establish a rival to the Socialist and Communist Internationals. It was not until the International Communist Opposition itself had for all practical purposes given up the idea that it could "reform" the Comintern and began to seek closer relations with the centrists, between 1938 and 1940, that Wynkoop's Revolutionary Socialist Workers Party came to be aligned with the member parties of the International Communist Opposition.

In those years the ICO affiliates' press carried some news about their Dutch counterpart. In September 1939 Jay Lovestone reported in *Workers Age* on a relatively good showing the Dutch group had made in recent municipal elections: "We take our hats off to our brother party in Holland. In the present situation it is a mighty achievement for revolutionary socialists to hold their own. But to score a victory in the teeth of menacing reaction, to advance the cause of militant socialism despite the fatal Stalinist betrayal of the principles and ideals of Marx and Lenin, is a victory of vital significance . . . splendid in its inspiration beyond the frontiers of Dutch imperialism." The Revolutionary Socialist Workers Party (RSAP) had received forty-one thousand votes in the municipal elections, enough in a parliamentary poll to have assured it at least one seat in parliament. In Rotterdam it had received seventeen thousand votes, compared to seven thousand in the previous municipal elections in 1935, while the Communists had dropped from thirteen thousand to nine thousand. The RSAP had elected two councillors in Rotterdam instead of the one it had previously had; while the Communists had also elected two, instead of the three they had previously had.⁷⁶

The RSAP does not appear to have survived the Second World War.

The Archeiomarxists of Greece

Another party which for a few years had more or less close association with the International Communist Opposition was the Archeiomarxist party of

Greece. Professor James Dertouzos, student of Greek organized labor and Communism, has noted that "The history of the Archeiomarxists goes back to 1919, when Francisco Tsoulatis organized what is termed a 'secret group' within the Socialist Labor Party, the forerunner of the KKE." (The KKE was the Communist Party of Greece.) This was the Union of Communism, which dissolved early in 1921. Later that year, Tsoulatis established a new group, "whose primary function evidentially, was that of theoretical discussion." It established a publication, *Archives of Marxism*, from which came the name of Tsoulatis group, Archeiomarxists. Professor Dertouzos has commented on the nature of the Archeiomarxist group (the KAKE):

The basic philosophy of the KAKE was enunciated in its slogan 'first education, then action.' That is, the communist movement must first prepare leadership and cadres along the lines suggested by Marx and Lenin as a preliminary to revolutionary activity. Tsoulatis was not prepared to organize a formal party until the educational process was completed . . . Accordingly, the early activities of the Archeiomarxists were limited to the formation of conspiratorial groups the existence of each of which was kept from others. The purpose of these groups was indoctrination in Marxist-Leninist theory.

Ultimately, however, the Archeiomarxists organized as a party, known by its Greek initials as KAKE. In 1930 it was admitted to the Trotskyists' International Left Opposition, but shortly afterwards was expelled on the insistence of a rival Greek group.

Dertouzos has noted that "The little information I have concerning the activities of the KAKE between 1930 and the post-World War II period indicates that it had some influence in the Greek labor movement, but not much. During the occupation, the Archeiomarxists refused to join with the communists in their resistance to the Germans, and remained outside of the EAM—the National Liberation Front."

Dertouzos has noted that when he interviewed Jay Lovestone on January 5, 1954, Lovestone told him that "The Archeiomarxists are a right-opposition group associated with the Brandlerites of Germany, the European counterparts of the American Lovestoneites. At one time a large group in Greece."⁷⁷

It is not clear whether the Archeiomarxists ever sent delegates to congresses of the International Communist Opposition. However, the Greek party was represented at the Revolutionary Socialist Congress in Paris in February 1938, at which the remnants of the International Communist Opposition joined forces with the "Centrist" International Bureau for Revolutionary Socialist Unity.⁷⁸

The Communist Opposition in Latin America

The only two Latin American countries in which the ideas of the International Communist Opposition found support and resulted in formation of

separate groups were Argentina and Mexico. However, only in Mexico was there direct contact or association with the ICO.

In Argentina the principal Oppositionist figure was José Penelón, a founder of the Communist Party and member of the City Council of Buenos Aires. That Penelón's criticisms of the Comintern position ran along parallel lines to those of the ICO is indicated by the account given by the Stalinist party's official history, which claimed that "Those opportunists considered that, in the new conditions of relative stabilization of capitalism it was necessary to be 'prudent' in developing the struggles for the demands of the workers, since according to them there did not exist a combative spirit in the masses, and to adopt an attitude of appeasement towards Social Democracy."⁷⁹ The official Communist history also claimed that "Basing themselves on the correct principle that the Communists must be champions of the unification of the labor movement, they deformed this principle by insisting that the revolutionary elements of the labor movement must capitulate to the reformists, renouncing their political positions and independent tactics within the unions."⁸⁰ Thus, the Penelón group opposed the dual unionism being put forward by the Comintern, as well as its Third Period theories about a "new revolutionary wave."⁸¹

The split in the Argentine Communist Party came in 1928, somewhat earlier than it did in most parties. Penelón formed the Partido Comunista de la Región Argentina, subsequently renamed the Partido Concentración Obrera. It continued in existence until 1971, although never being a major factor in Argentine left-wing politics. It finally merged with one faction of the Socialist Party, the Partido Socialista Democrático.

Although there is evidence that Penelón sympathized with Bukharin in the fight within the Soviet Union and the Comintern, his party never sought any international affiliation. There is no indication that he was in any kind of contact with the ICO, in spite of his general alignment with their positions on key issues.⁸²

In Mexico, although personal contacts of leaders of the Lovestoneites with the Mexican Communists had been substantial, it was not until 1937 that a short-lived Communist Opposition group was actually established there. Bertram Wolfe had lived in Mexico for several years in the early 1920s, had represented the Mexican Communist Party at the Fourth Congress of the Comintern in 1923, and was finally thrown out of Mexico in 1925 because of the government's dislike of his influence in the Mexican party.⁸³ Jay Lovestone had also visited Mexico various times while still leader of the U.S. Communist Party.

After establishment of the Opposition in the United States, it had close contact with the Mexican painter and ex-Communist leader, Diego Rivera, who lectured at the New Workers School as early as April 1932.⁸⁴ Later that year, Rivera contributed one hundred dollars to *Workers Age* and wrote that

"I am glad that my small contribution to the paper of your group has been of help. My attitude is the following: I believe that the unification of the Communist Party is absolutely necessary. We need a unification convention; the Party must open its ranks to all the different tendencies and there should be an open decision to arrive at a unifying resolution. I want to be useful in whatever measure and manner I can to further the above."⁸⁵ In 1933 Diego Rivera painted a series of twenty-one murals entitled "Portrait of America" for the walls of the Lovestoneite headquarters in New York City.⁸⁶

However, Rivera did not establish a Right Opposition group in Mexico. On the contrary, he became a Trotskyist in the mid-1930s, and was influential in getting President Lázaro Cárdenas to invite Trotsky to live in Mexico. Trotsky's first residence there was the house of Diego Rivera. The two men soon quarreled, and Rivera continued his political peregrinations, finally ending up in the mid-1950s back in the Communist Party, from which he had been expelled in 1929.⁸⁷

It was not until early 1937 that a Communist Opposition group, the Marxist Workers Bloc of Mexico, was finally formed. Its establishment was apparently much influenced by the prominence of the POUM in the early months of the Spanish Civil War. It adopted *La Batalla*, the name of the POUM paper, as the title of its own journal.

An editorial in the Mexican *La Batalla* set forth the position of the Marxist Workers Bloc. After criticizing the Socialists, Stalinists and Trotskyites, it noted that "The defeats to which these three tendencies in the international working class have brought it, led to the development of an entire series of groups and parties of a Marxist character independent of these Internationals and grouped in the International Communist Opposition . . . and in the London Committee for Revolutionary Socialist Unity. Free from all opportunist illusions of the Peoples Front variety, from all anti-sovietism . . . with lively internal democracy, without sectarianism of any species and with a great theoretical consistency, all these parties constitute at present the strongest focal points of revolutionary Marxism." The editorial proclaimed that "The Marxist Workers Bloc of Mexico adheres to their tendency." It then explained that "Its birth came out of the necessity of beginning at last the task for the construction of a proletarian party of Marxist and Leninist orientation."⁸⁸

There is no indication of how long this group lasted. It is certain that it never became a major factor in Mexican left-wing politics.

Some Oppositions That Never Happened

Finally we should note two cases in which potential Communist Opposition groups were never established in spite of original opposition of leading figures in those parties to the Comintern line imposed by Stalin in 1928 and 1929: Italy and Poland. At the time of the deposition of Ernst Thaelmann from

leadership of the German party and his sudden reinstatement by the ECCI, the Italian representatives, Serra (Angelo Tasca) and Ercoli (Palmiro Togliatti) at first opposed the ECCI action, which had been inspired by Stalin. Jules Humbert-Droz wrote his Swiss comrades that "A letter of Ercoli to Serra let us foresee and hope that, in the troubled situation and on all the serious matters confronting the Comintern, the Italian party would say a clear word and take a correct position." But, he added, "the publication of the resolution of the Italian Central Committee on the German question did away with all illusions and all hope on the matter."⁸⁹

Revolutionary Age noted that although after the Sixth Congress of the Comintern the Italian Party adopted a conciliatory resolution, it "put up some resistance to the new course." However, the article added, the ECCI expelled Serra, and Ercoli then capitulated, at the Tenth Plenum in July 1929. Ercoli is quoted as saying "We must give in on Russian and international questions in order to be able to serve the Italian policy of our Party. Were we not to do this then Moscow would without scruple put in a 'left' Party leadership made up of some gangsters from the Lenin School."⁹⁰

However, expulsion of Serra-Tasca and capitulation of Ercoli-Togliatti did not completely end the matter. In May 1930 *Revolutionary Age* reported "a sharp struggle" in a recent Plenum of the Italian party, led by Politburo members Pasquini and Santini who "put forward a position on political and organization questions characterized by the ultra-left Party leadership as 'opportunist.'" Pasquini and Santini were removed from leadership and the Politburo was instructed to "take severe organizational measures against all comrades who oppose in any way the policy of the Communist International and of the Communist Party."⁹¹ A few months later Ercoli reported to the ECCI that there was still opposition from lower cadres in the Italian party, objection to the leadership's claims of the imminence of war between Italy and the USSR; to Comintern insistence on the "on-coming revolutionary wave," and on "radicalization of the masses"; to misrepresentation of the ideas of Serra; and to downplaying the connection between daily struggles of peasants and workers and the revolution.⁹² However, in spite of optimistic reports in *Revolutionary Age*, no Opposition movement emerged in Italian Communism.

Palmiro Togliatti continued for another decade and a half to be a functionary of the Comintern, miraculously escaping Stalin's purges, playing a particularly Stalinist role in Spain during the Civil War. He emerged from World War II as undisputed leader of the Italian Communist Party and perhaps partially redeemed himself in history by leaving a "testament" upon his death in 1964, which stressed the need for each Communist Party to seek its own road to socialism and criticized dictatorial and bureaucratic characteristics of Communist-controlled societies.⁹³ Tasca moved to Paris, joined the staff of

the Socialist newspaper, *Le Populaire*, and wrote books on the origins of fascism and the "secret intrigues of Stalin."⁹⁴

Adam Ciolkosz, leader of the Polish Socialist Party in exile, has written of failure of a Communist Opposition to develop in Poland:

There has never been a group or party on the lines of the ICO in Poland. It is true that a group usually nicknamed as "three W" (Adolf Warski, Henryk Walecki and Maria Juszutka-Wera Kostrzewa) was time and again charged within the Comintern of being intellectually and politically associated with the Brandler-Thalheimer group. . . . But the "three W" never went as far as to create a separate organization or party, and they did not split from the Stalinist party, nor did they adopt the name of the CPO. The reasons for such a moderation were threefold: first, the fact that the Communist Party of Poland has been an illegal party and it would not be easy to form another illegal CP on the Brandler-Thalheimer lines; second, the myth of Russia and the Russian CP was still immense among the Polish Communists; third, and most important, the CP of Poland has always been extremely weak and devoid of any real influence among the Polish proletarian masses who did not care about the divisions within the Communist movement. . . .

To finish with, I have to add that the "three W" group has never been clearly defined and confined. Its border have been always fluid, according to the shifting power within the CP of Poland which, in its turn, depended on varying trends in the leadership of the CI. One can claim that the "three W" group has been composed of more mature and older leaders with deeper roots in the Polish working masses and a better understanding of the characteristics of Polish workers, as different from Russian or German workers. But their weakness has always been in the submission to the Russian movement and identification with it. All the "three W" perished in Stalin's dungeons, to be "rehabilitated" after 1956.⁹⁵

It was virtually inevitable that those national Communist groups expelled from the Comintern between 1928 and 1930 would come together to form an "international" of some sort. Although they insisted strongly that the International Communist Opposition was not a rival to the Comintern, it did in fact unite national groups which shared the same general outlook, and which were opposed to the policies advocated and practiced by the Communist International after Stalin had taken complete control of that organization.

Establishment of the ICO

The first step towards bringing together the various Right Opposition national parties and groups was taken between March 17 and March 19, 1930. A meeting held in Berlin on the suggestion of the central committee of the Communist Party of Sweden was attended by representatives of the Swedish party, the Communist Party of Germany (Opposition) and by the Indian M. N. Roy, and N. Neurath of the Czechoslovakian Opposition Communists. It was reported that "The discussion included the questions of the international situation of the Communist Opposition," and "There were detailed reports on the condition of the individual

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opposition groups in the sections of the Comintern." Also, "The basic line in relation of the Comintern, to the Social-democracy and to the various groupings in a number of countries was considered." There was "complete unanimity on the necessity of international consolidation of all those Communist opposition groups which . . . are fighting against the ultra-left course of the present Comintern leadership." To this end, it was agreed to set up an information center with its headquarters in Berlin which would take over publication of the *International Information of the Communist Opposition*, a bulletin until then issued by the German Opposition party.¹

The first plenary conference of the International Communist Opposition met in Berlin in December 1930, attended by delegations from the Oppositions of Germany, Alsace, Sweden, the United States, Switzerland, Czechoslovakia, and Norway. Written reports were submitted from Austria, Finland, Italy, and Canada. The conference "laid the basis for effective, active, cooperation of the Communist forces in the various countries expelled for fighting against the Party wrecking ultra-left course."²

Jay Lovestone, the United States delegate to this meeting, reported that its agenda was, "1. Consideration of oral and written reports of the various opposition sections. 2. Discussion and adoption of draft platform of International Communist Opposition. 3. Organization and press matters." He noted that "There was a certain vigorous revolutionary optimism running thru the deliberations of the conference." He added that "Every report and reporter underscored the splendid objective situation for the growth of the Communist Party. . . . It was an optimism founded on Leninist understanding, on revolutionary conviction, sacrifice and boundless devotion to our class, the exploited workers."

Lovestone reported that "The development of a united working class front against capitalist reaction—particularly against Fascism—along with energetic unconditional defense of the Soviet Union were emphasized as central tasks." He added that "Our platform very correctly emphasizes the Leninist tactical attitude toward trade unions and the need for the militants and Communists working in the mass unions. The necessity of united front tactics, the need of the Party's winning the majority of working class are brought home very clearly." Finally, Lovestone emphasized that "The International Communist Opposition Center is thus not a new Comintern. It is only the organizational center of the struggle for the restoration and reconstruction of the Communist International."³

The Platform of the International Communist Opposition

Aside from establishing a permanent organization, the other major item of business of the first conference of the International Communist Opposition was adoption of a "Platform," which remained the fundamental statement of

principles of the ICO. It started with a section on "basic principles," which proclaimed that "The International Communist Opposition stands on the basis of the fundamentals of Communism. It fights for: 1. The establishment of the proletarian dictatorship in the form of the Soviet state as the necessary transition to a classless Socialist society. 2. The defense of the Soviet Union as a proletarian state." The first section of the platform then went on to state that "The Communist Opposition regards the international consolidation of the Communist Parties and movements in the individual countries into a united Communist World Party, into the Communist International, as indispensable." However, it was necessary for the Comintern to function on the basis of democratic centralism.

The platform then proclaimed that "The International Communist Opposition carries on an uncompromising struggle against open reformism and against hidden reformism (centrism). Its aim is the complete destruction of the influence of reformism upon the working class."

The ICO platform then set forth the most fundamental element in the organization's principles, that is, its role as a Communist Opposition:

The International Communist Opposition aims neither at building new Communist Parties nor a new Communist International. It aims to overcome the crisis in the existing Parties of the Communist International and in the Communist International as a whole, to save and restore to health the Communist world movement, to reestablish the unity and fighting power upon the tactical principles of Leninism. The International Communist Opposition, whether inside the Party or expelled, whether majority or minority of the Communist Parties, is therefore a part of the Communist International and its sections. It is an organized tactical tendency of Communism.

The remainder of the platform dealt principally with specific criticisms of the then current line of the Comintern. It attacked the Stalinists' doctrine of the Third Period. Although admitting (as the Comintern maintained) that there had been two "stages of development of capitalism" since the First World War—that is, "the post war crisis" and "the so-called stabilization of capitalism"—and that a third stage of renewed revolutionary struggle was inevitable," it said that "It is incorrect to speak of a special third period of post-war capitalism, dating from 1927—as does the Communist International. The adoption of the third period does not rest upon a real analysis of world capitalism, but upon a schematic transference of the chief stages of Socialist construction in the Soviet Union."

The Opposition platform then discussed the united front: "The tactics of the united front have for their aim neither a lasting alliance with Social Democracy nor the organizational fusion of the Communist parties with Social Democracy but rather the winning of the majority of the working class for Communism. . . . The tactics of the united front require for their execution the setting up of such daily slogans or partial demands which correspond to the

existing conditions and to the existing stage of understanding of the masses of the toilers as a whole. . . . The activity of the Communists in parliament and municipal councils must—side by side with the basic revolutionary propaganda—aim at the organization of the united front of the workers in extra-parliamentary activity.”

The platform also spelled out the ICO position on the trade union question. It specified different tactics depending on the trade union situation in particular countries. Where the unions still remained united “the Communist Opposition is against the formation of new ‘revolutionary’ trade unions.” Where “red” unions already exist, “the general course must be for the reestablishment of trade union unity, but this reunification must not be fought for as a capitulation of the red unions before the reformist unions but rather along the road of strengthening the red unions.” In countries where the union movement was just getting started or, as in the United States, where major groups were still unorganized, the platform specified that “1. It must use as a basis for the formation of trade unions all existing trade unions which have a mass character. 2. New trade unions should be organized in those industries in which no trade unions exist as yet or where the existing trade unions have no mass basis at all. 3. The general question of organizing the unorganized must be connected with the question of forming a left wing in the existing trade unions.”

Finally, the ICO platform dealt with the Opposition criticisms of the internal situation of the Comintern and its parties:

The Communist Opposition demands of the Communist International:

1. The extension of the right (existing in the statutes but not in fact) of criticism—which today exists only for the leadership of the CI.

2. The preparation of important decisions of the CI thru international discussions.

3. The abandonment of the mechanical transference of the points of view and inner Party differences in the CPSU to the other sections and of the consideration of the questions of the individual sections primarily from the point of view of the differences in the CPSU.

4. The replacement of the actual monopoly of the CPSU in the leadership of the Comintern by a real collective and, at the same time, united and centralized international leadership based upon Party representatives who are in the position to pass their own judgment upon the class relations in their countries and who are not merely officials of the international leadership but actually trusted representatives of their sections.

5. The legal sections of the Comintern must raise their own means for regular Party work. International financial support shall be given: A) to illegal Parties; b) to legal Parties for special campaigns and for the production and distribution of international propaganda literature.

6. The international leadership shall have as its tasks: a) the leading of international actions; b) the working out of general tactical lines; c) the supervision and control of the carrying thru of the fundamental principles as well as the general tactical line by the

individual sections. The international leadership cannot replace the leaderships of the sections. The international leadership should lead but not hold in apron strings.

7. The withdrawal of all expulsions against opponents of the ultra-left course.

Insofar as individual parties were concerned, the ICO platform demanded "1. In legal times the election of functionaries thru the membership. 2. The election of Party Congress delegates and the delegates to the international congress thru the membership after a foregoing discussion. 3. The right of discussion of all Party questions within the bounds of the Communist fundamentals and discipline of action. 4. The removal of all corrupt elements from the Party apparatus."⁴

This platform thus clearly reflected the principal issues which had given rise to the creation of the Opposition Communist movement. It might finally be noted that in spite of the fact that those who made up the leadership of the ICO had been thrown out of their respective parties (or in the cases of the Swedes and Alsations out of the Comintern) because they had been regarded by Stalin as "Bukharinites," there was no effort to link up their movement with the position of Bukharin within the USSR. They quite specifically rejected any such transference of internal Soviet quarrels into the international arena.

The Second Conference of the ICO

The ICO's second congress took place in Berlin between July 2 and 5, 1932. It was marked by controversies which were to persist throughout the life of the ICO and were to debilitate it over the years. The agenda was: "(1) The world political situation and our attitude to the Comintern and the Soviet Union. . . . (2) Our attitude to centrism and to Trotskyism. . . . (3) Organization matters and the extension of our organization." August Thalheimer of the German KPO was the reporter on the first question, with Kilbom of Sweden being coreporter; Jay Lovestone reported on the second issue and Walter Bringolf of Switzerland was coreporter; and Heinrich Brandler of Germany gave the sole report on organizational matters.

The German KPO had submitted a draft resolution on the first item, which was supported in the discussion by their delegation, as well as by those of the United States and Czechoslovakia. It was opposed by the Swedish, Norwegian, and Swiss representatives. The official report of the conference summarized the position of the Swedish coreporter Kilbom: "The proposed draft . . . he thought, weakened our criticism of the Communist International and its individual sections. Comrade Kilbom . . . concluded that we must not weaken our criticism but must, on the contrary, strengthen it. He declared that the Swedish comrades were not ready for unification with the Communist International merely on the basis of the recognition and the realization of

democratic centralism but demanded more substantial assurances, changes in the statutes of the Comintern which would remove in fact Stalin's monopoly of Comintern leadership."⁵

The position against which Kilbom was arguing was stated in the resolution which was ultimately adopted, although this resolution was modified in some respects from the original German draft:

The I.C.O. recognizes that the reestablishment of inner-Party democracy and of democratic centralism . . . is only a part of the liquidation of the ultra-left course. It, however, regards the reestablishment of normal Party life as sufficient to allow it to work, within the C.P. and in the limits of Communist discipline, for the complete and open liquidation of the ultra-left course—which would make this liquidation possible at minimum cost and damage to the Party and would stimulate the quickest and most extensive reestablishment of the confidence of the working class in the Party, today so badly damaged by the ultra-left course and the leadership responsible for it."

In rebutting the arguments of Kilbom and his supporters, the backers of the German draft went to the heart of the issue: "In connection with the viewpoint of the Scandinavian and Swiss comrades, it was pointed out that . . . if carried to its logical conclusion it must imply that the Communist International and its sections are no longer to be reformed, are hopeless, and that a new party and therefore a new International without the Party of the Soviet Union, must come into being." Within another year's time, the Swedish, Norwegian, and Swiss Communist Opposition parties were to reach that conclusion and to withdraw from the ICO. However, they were not yet ready to go that far. The report of the meeting notes that "In the special conferences with the Scandinavian comrades and in the editorial commission these questions were discussed in even greater detail. The result of these conferences is a new formulation of the resolution, without of course, any basic modifications."

A controversy also developed over the proposed resolution on centrism and Trotskyism. Here Jay Lovestone and Walter Bringolf were the principal antagonists. The proposed resolution, ultimately divided into two, one dealing with centrism, the other with Trotskyism condemned those groups seeking to organize parties and international groups "between" the Socialists and Communists. It specifically condemned the minority in the German KPO which had withdrawn to join such a group, the Socialist Workers Party. Bringolf is reported as saying "that he had no intention of making a separate co-report; he merely declared that the Swiss comrades were of the opinion, in regard to the conflict in the CPG-O, that the majority was indeed basically correct, but the minority was treated incorrectly and had an altogether too sharp tone adopted towards it."

Brandler in his organizational report complained about the pressure on the German KPO not only to conduct its own affairs but also those of the ICO. He suggested limitation of the functions of the ICO and also urged an interna-

tional drive for funds to maintain it. It was agreed to issue the platform, the March 1930 open letter and the resolutions of the 1932 conference in a pamphlet in German, French, Swedish, and Norwegian. One optimistic organizational note was the reading of a long report on its activities by the Spanish Bloque Obrero y Campesino of Joaquín Maurín.

The conclusion of the official report on the conference was more optimistic than realistic. It said: "The second conference of the I.C.O. succeeded, after a sharp discussion, in settling the differences and arriving at clear and binding decisions. In organizational matters, decisions were reached which, if carried out, will make possible better work for the future. Good work for the rehabilitation of the Communist world movement was accomplished."⁶

The July 1933 ICO Plenum

In July a kind of minicongress of the International Communist Opposition was held. This was an "enlarged session of the Buro" of the ICO, called to deal particularly with two matters: an analysis of the causes and results of the Hitler triumph in Germany, and an effort to launch a new "centrist" international. It was reported that groups from Germany, France, the Netherlands, Switzerland, and the United States were represented, and that the ICO affiliates of Sweden and Norway were not.

Two principal documents came out of this meeting, and a third was issued by the ICO Buro soon afterwards in the spirit of the Plenum. The first dealt particularly with Germany, starting with the statement that "The victory of Fascism in Germany is an alarm signal for the entire international working class," it said that recent events in Germany "have shown that bourgeois democracy is no defense of the rights of the workers." Therefore, "the entire international working class stands before the historical alternative: Fascism or Communism," and "Only in the struggle for the establishment of the Soviet dictatorship can the Fascist dictatorships in Germany, Italy, and Poland be overthrown."

The Nazi triumph "exposed the complete bankruptcy of reformism in principle and practice," and "The 'democratic road' of the working class to political power and to socialism has disclosed itself as the road to Fascist slavery. Social democracy bears the chief blame for the victory of Fascism in Germany, as was the case also in Italy and Poland." However, the official Communist movement had also failed. The resolution argued that "the German experience is . . . the practical refutation of the false tactics of the C.P.G. and the C.I. and the evidence of their incapacity to carry the Communist fundamentals to victory." It charged that "as a consequence of its false tactics, the C.P.G. was not in a position to utilize the objectively revolutionary situation present in Germany."

Therefore, the resolution concluded, "Developments in Germany have confirmed the political outlook of the C.P.G.-O. on all points and have shown that it is the politically clearest and firmest nucleus of the Communist movement in Germany." However, the resolution said, recognition of this by the official Communists would not come "from above, but only from below, that is, thru the activity of the Communist Opposition rallying the members of the Communist Parties around itself."

The ICO Plenum repudiated Trotsky's conclusions on the basis of the German experience—the need for establishing new Communist parties and a Fourth International. It declared that Trotsky's claim that the German Communist Party "has betrayed the working class is an impermissible exaggeration to provide the excuse for the formation of a new, allegedly Communist Party, with other principles than those of the C.I., i.e. on an anti-Communist, centrist-reformist basis."

The resolution then argued that "Especially is it necessary to expose all attempts to attribute the tactical mistakes of the C.I. and the C.P.G. and the defeat of the German working class to the alleged national interests of the Soviet Union. The assertion that the theory of the construction of socialism in one country has made the Russian Communists sacrifice the interests of the workers of other countries, must be branded as dangerous anti-bolshevism." It went on to add that "The I.C.O. approves and supports the policy of the C.P.S.U. which aims to create a classless socialist society in spite of all difficulties."

The 1933 Plenum was faced with the fact that the Swedish and Norwegian affiliates—which were not represented at the session—were in the process of breaking with the ICO position on centrism. They had decided to participate in a meeting of centrists and Trotskyites about to take place in Paris. Without referring to the Swedish and Norwegian groups by name, the 1933 Plenum resolution presented them with an implied warning:

As a tactical tendency within the international Communist movement, the I.C.O. must have unconditional firmness in questions of principle and tactics. The decisions of the sessions of the I.C.O. are binding for all affiliated organizations, without infringing, of course, the freedom of criticism within the bounds of Communist fundamentals. These decisions constitute the guide for the entire political activity of these groups. . . .

The I.C.O. rejects participation in the international conference of centrist parties now being planned.

The I.C.O. demands the reestablishment of national and international unity of the Communist movement on the basis of the realization of democratic centralism, i.e. the right of free discussion and criticism within the bounds of Communist principles.

To counteract the influence of the decision of the Swedes and Norwegians to participate in the Paris conference, the Plenum then put forth its own

proposal for action: "On the basis of the German experience, the I.C.O. proposes to the C.I. and its sections the setting up of a working block, which, without wiping out tactical differences and with the retention of the full freedom of mutual criticism, can establish joint action for carrying out united front tactics, for a common struggle against reformism, centrism and Trotskyism."⁷

The ICO Letter to the Paris Conference

The second document of the July 1933 Plenum of the ICO was a letter to its Swedish affiliate trying to dissuade it from participating in the Paris "centrist" conference. This has been dealt with elsewhere in this volume. The third document, issued shortly after the end of the Plenum, was a letter to the Paris conference itself, from the buro of the ICO, refusing an invitation to be represented there.

The ICO buro letter gave several reasons for not attending the Paris conference. The first was that "The I.C.O. is an international organized Communist movement. Its goal involves a struggle for the embodiment of a definite line of Communist tactics within the Communist International." In contrast, "while the new International to be launched at the Paris Conference aims to combat open reformism of the type espoused by the Socialist International . . . it does not make a genuine and complete break with reformism as such. It is but an attempt to oppose to open reformism and to Communism its own particular variety of reformism." Thus, the ICO buro said, the preparatory documents for the Paris meeting "disavow Communism, not only the sort espoused by the C.I. and its various sections, but any sort whatsoever. This all comes out in the demagogic paragraphs where, in sharp and unambiguous terms, the C.I. and its sections are accused of treason to Communism and the proletarian revolution in order to serve the national interests of the Soviet Union." Therefore, "the conclusion to be drawn from all this is that the actual principles upon which the new international is to be built are those of a distinct variety of reformism well known in the history of the labor movement, namely, left reformism or centrism."⁸

Disintegration of the International Communist Opposition

The International Communist Opposition went through a precipitous and continuing decline from 1933 on. The Swedish and Norwegian sections withdrew in that year, to join the new organization established by the Paris conference. The Bloque Obrero y Campesino of Spain, which had had fraternal relations with the ICO and maintained friendly contacts with some of its national sections, did not formally affiliate with the ICO, but instead also

joined the group formed at Paris. The Alsatian section was expelled in 1934. In 1937 the ICO's Indian affiliate broke off relations with it because of the ICO's strong criticisms of the Moscow Trials and final unequivocal break with Stalin.

Meanwhile several other ICO affiliates were destroyed, otherwise disappeared, or were reduced to tiny groups. This occurred as early as the end of 1930 with the Finnish Opposition. It happened to the important German section after the advent of Hitler to power, and to the Austrian section after the Dolfuss putsch in 1934. The Czechoslovakian affiliate lost its Czech-speaking section in 1933-34 and the greatly reduced German-speaking section disappeared after the occupation of the Sudetenland by the Nazis in October 1938. Meanwhile the Swiss Opposition had joined the Social Democrats.

However, in spite of all these vicissitudes, the International Communist Opposition continued to function. With the triumph of the Nazis, its headquarters were removed from Berlin to Paris, where they continued to be manned almost exclusively by Germans. The buro of the ICO continued to hold plenary sessions from time to time. One held in mid-1937 dealt particularly with the policy of the Stalinists in Spain during the Civil War and issued a resolution stating that "We affirm the inescapable responsibility and guilt of the leadership of the Communist International and of its dominant section, the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, for the anti-proletarian behavior of their followers in Spain and declare that those who are responsible for the open betrayal of the Spanish Revolution deserve the same severe punishment as is meted out in the Soviet Union to counter-revolutionary wreckers who commit crimes against the Russian Revolution."⁹

The drastic reduction in the forces of the International Communist Opposition was one factor making what remained of the organization more willing by 1938 than they had been five years before to join forces with the previously much-despised centrists. However, another element was the fact that those remaining in the ICO had generally become convinced by 1938 that there was no possibility of "reforming" the Comintern, the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, or the other affiliates of the CI. They were thus driven logically towards the conclusion that some different kind of organization of what they were by then calling "revolutionary socialists" had to be established. As a result, what was left of the International Communist Opposition participated in February 1938 in the Revolutionary Socialist Congress in Paris, which gave rise to a new version of the International Bureau for Revolutionary Socialist Unity (or "London Buro"), the old "Centrist" group.

The London Buro of the Middle 1930s

The group with which the ICO more or less merged in the February 1938 congress had its origins in the fact that during the late 1920s and early 1930s,

elements had broken away from the Socialist and Communist parties in various countries, and some whole parties had withdrawn from or been expelled from the two Internationals. The New York *New Leader*, then the official organ of the Socialist Party of the United States, reported in February 1933 that these groups "have been closely cooperating in the past three years."¹⁰ A meeting of their representatives took place at a congress of the French Parti de l'Unité Proletarian, a dissident Socialist group headed by Paul Louis, in February 1933, where there were "fraternal" delegates from the Independent Labor Party of Great Britain, the Socialist Workers Party (SAP) of Germany, the Norwegian Labor Party, and the Maximalist Socialist Party of Italy. The *New Leader* noted that the meeting issued an appeal "to the Communist International and the Labor and Socialist International for unity of action in the face of world-wide reaction and the danger of Fascism,"¹¹ and decided to call a conference for the purpose of establishing a new international group.¹²

The founding meeting of the new organization took place in Paris in August 1933. The parties with delegates there included those which had been represented at the PUP congress, plus the Swedish Communist Party, affiliated until then with the ICO," the International Left Opposition (the organization of followers of Trotsky);¹³ and the Spanish Bloque Obrero y Campesino.¹⁴

The attempt to form an alliance between left-wing Socialist parties and some Right Opposition Communist groups on the one hand, and the Trotskyites on the other, did not bear fruit. Trotsky and his followers attended the conference for the purpose of attracting to his banner some of the groups which had not until then been associated with him. Boris Goldenberg, then a member of the "foreign secretariat" of the German SAP, has written about this aspect of the Paris conference:

What Isaac Deutscher writes (*The Popular Outcast*, 1963, page 264) is *wrong*. Trotsky attended in *person* (without beard, which he shaved, probably to ensure his "incognito," as he was forbidden by the police to go to Paris). The meeting took place at the apartment of the parents of Simone Weil who later was considered as some kind of "Saint" and was at the time close to the Trotskyites. . . . A dozen or more took part; Trotskyites (Molinier, Franc, Neville) and the German representatives Erwin Ackerknecht (later professor of the History of Medicine at Wisconsin)—Jack Walcher and myself for the SAP; de Kadt from a Dutch group which also belonged to the 'London International and the Dutch ex-communist Sneevliet. I forget the others.

The topic under discussion was the formation of a new International. I remember Walcher telling Trotsky, a) that a new "International" could not be formed on the basis of a *defeat* (then by Hitler); b) nor as a union of sects under the leadership and total hegemony of a historical leader like Trotsky who, inevitably, would dominate the scene. Trotsky required that we (SAP and others) separate ourselves from centrist and reformist parties, like the Norwegian one—to which Walcher (and I) contested that

this would mean to break off relations with the only proletarian mass party collaborating with us. So nothing came for the moment of the plan to create the IV International—with us. By “us” is meant here the SAP and the Dutch de Kadet group, not the other members of the London “International” considered by Trotsky as centrists and reformists.¹⁵

The 1933 Paris conference established the International Bureau for Revolutionary Socialist Unity. Fenner Brockway of the British Independent Labor Party, was its secretary and its headquarters were in London, hence its popular name “London bureau.” The only major defection which the London bureau had between 1933 and 1938 was that of the Norwegian Labor Party (its biggest affiliate), which withdrew in November 1935,¹⁶ and early in 1938 affiliated with the Labor and Socialist International.¹⁷ By that time, the London bureau had member parties in Great Britain, Sweden, Germany, Spain, Italy, the Netherlands, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Greece, Palestine, Rumania, and Bulgaria, and claimed to have “contacts in twenty countries.”¹⁸

Rapprochement of ICO and London Bureau

By mid-1937 the International Communist Opposition was seeking a rapprochement with the London bureau. Lambda, foreign affairs columnist of *Workers Age*, writing in the issue of September 15, 1937 (page 2), explained the reasons for this: “recent developments of international significance—especially the civil war in Spain, the disastrous effects of the People’s Front in France, the changed attitude of the Communist International on war and other questions, and especially the Stalinist terror in the Soviet Union—have powerfully stimulated the tendencies of reorientation in the working class movement of Europe and the world.” He added that “These changes in the international labor movement are being given careful attention by the International Communist Opposition. . . . Negotiations with a view to collaboration have been initiated between the I.C.O. and the London Bureau.”

The ICO had presented a five-point basis for such negotiations: “1. For the proletarian revolution in Spain, defense of the P.O.U.M. 2. No support to any policy of class collaboration either in peace or in war. 3. Support of the revolutionary movement in the colonies against imperialism. 4. For proletarian democracy in the Soviet Union—defense of the Soviet Union in which a socialist basis of society is being laid. 4. For inner democracy in all proletarian organizations.” Lambda noted that the London bureau had also put forward five points as the basis of negotiation, which “differ somewhat on the first point from the I.C.O.’s proposals,” but that “further negotiations will doubtless remove these differences. At any rate, a definite realignment of international working class forces is beginning to get under way.”

The February 1938 Conference

Negotiations between the London buro and the ICO resulted in the International congress in Paris in February 1938, attended by representatives of the following organizations:

Swedish Socialist Party (former Swedish Communist Party, ex-ICO affiliate)
 British Independent Labor Party
 Spanish Workers Party of Marxist Unity (POUM)
 Italian Socialist Party (Maximalist)
 German Socialist Workers Party (SAP)
 Palestine Workers Party
 Revolutionary Socialist League of Holland
 International Revolutionary Youth Bureau
 International Communist Opposition (including German, American and Danish Sections)
 African Workers Party
 Archeio-Marxist Communist Party of Greece
 Kibbutz Artzi of Palestine
 Revolutionary Socialist Workers Party (RSAP) of Holland
 United Proletarian Party (PUP) of France
 German "Neue Weg"
 Socialist Group "Alarm" of Czechoslovakia
 French Autonomous Socialist Youth
 Revolutionary Socialist Party of Great Britain
 Austrian Group "Der Funke"

Several other parties and groups had observers at this conference: the French and United States Socialist Parties, which still belonged to the Socialist International, as well as groups from Senegal, Indochina, Madagascar, Algeria, and the French Indian territory of Pondicherry.¹⁹ The parties and groups represented at the Paris congress thus included most of the more or less important elements outside of the Second and Third Internationals except the Trotskyites, as well as two left-leaning parties of the Socialist International.

The conference, after very extensive discussion, adopted resolutions on "The Popular Front, The Workers Front and Fascism,"²⁰ "The Fight Against Fascism,"²¹ "The Fight Against War" (opposing "collective security," and supporting the Leninist idea of using international war to make revolution);²² and on the Japanese War in China (opposing reliance on capitalist governments to stop Japan, and supporting revolutionary elements in both countries).²³ A resolution on Spain supported the POUM and called for alliance of all elements supporting the revolution within the Republican area.²⁴ Finally, a resolution on the Soviet Union "adopted as a basis of discussion only," pledged defense of the Soviet Union, but also urged "a return to proletarian democracy in Soviet Russia."²⁵

The fundamental resolution of the conference was written by Fenner Brockway of the ILP and Jay Lovestone. It sketched the failures of the Second and Third Internationals, and pronounced them hopeless of reform. It then proclaimed that "The need of the hour is the gathering together of all forces, on the basis of the principles of Marxism-Leninism, which are ready to cooperate in revolutionary struggle against all Imperialist forces, against the so-called democratic Capitalist Powers as well as the Fascist Powers, against Imperialist exploitation, war and poverty. Towards the realization of this need this Conference is a significant step."²⁶ However, the Paris conference was seen as one for "the preparation of a Revolutionary Marxist International" rather than "the formation artificially of a new International."²⁷

Frictions in the International Communist Opposition

This rapprochement between the ICO and the London buro aroused some resistance within the International Communist Opposition, particularly in its German affiliate. This was reflected in an exchange of letters between the Lovestoneites and the German KPO. We have available only the U.S. side of this correspondence, but it adequately reflects the questions at issue.

The Lovestoneites first commented on the "personal union" between the office of the ICO and the leadership of the German party. They noted that "We are naturally interested in the composition of the I.C.O. Buro," and added that "It is obviously incorrect on your part to maintain that, since today all members of the I.C.O. Buro are Germans, you may withdraw them and replace them as you please without us having any legitimate concern with it." The letter stressed that changing the ICO liaison man with the London buro, for instance, affected the ILLA as much as it affected the German KPO. However, the ILLA was not really interested in reorganizing the ICO because "we have already notified you of our proposal to dissolve the I.C.O. altogether and to have the constituent elements join with the constituent elements of the London Buro into a new International Center. Since that is our idea, there would obviously be no point to discussing plans for the reorganization of the I.C.O."²⁸

The Lovestoneites also objected to reservations of the German KPO concerning unification of the ICO and the London buro. The ILLA letter noted the German KPO's insistence "(a) that you will be bound only by those decisions of the London Buro with which you agree and for which you vote; and (b) that you reserve the right to act independently at all times in every way." The ILLA rejected these conditions and asked, "Is the I.C.O. to be in a privileged position or are all affiliates of the London Buro to have this extraordinary privilege?" It said that if the Germans had no confidence in the London buro, they should drop all discussion of merger, but added that "We cannot share this viewpoint."

Finally, the ILLA objected to the Germans' idea that the ICO should maintain its identity within the new international organization. The Lovestoneites argued that "If we agree to participate in the establishment of an International Center, we are going to do our utmost to make that center into the foundation of a new revolutionary socialist (communist) International. Furthermore, we think that the 6 point program adopted at the Paris Conference in February contains all the principles of Marxism-Leninism necessary for the foundation of such an International Center."²⁹

Developments After the February 1938 Conference

The remnants of the ICO continued to collaborate with the London buro and its affiliates until World War II brought an end to both organizations. Another conference was held in Paris at the end of October 1938, to form the International Workers Front Against War, and was attended by representatives of the London buro, its youth organization, the ICO, and "fifteen parties and sections from eight countries." *Workers Age* reported that "A careful analysis was made of the recent war crisis, the Munich agreement and the present situation. . . . A committee was appointed to continue the work." The meeting issued an "Appeal to the Workers of the World." It called upon "the working class to prepare actively to resist both imperialist war and imperialist peace." by "1. Refusal of all national unity with the capitalist class. 2. Opposition to rearmament within the capitalist system. . . . 3. Assistance to those workers who courageously fight the regimes in countries under fascist or military dictatorships. 4. Assistance to the colonial workers and peasants in their struggle against imperialism. 5. Defense of what remains of the Soviet revolution against imperialist attacks. . . . 5. Intensification of the class struggle in all countries, directed towards the socialist revolution."³⁰

It was necessary to straighten out the somewhat confused relationship among the various parties and groups which had been represented at the Paris conference of February 1938. After that meeting, the London buro, as an interim measure established an enlarged buro with representation of the ICO, the ILLA of the United States, the newly established French Socialist Workers and Peasants Party of Marceau Pivert, the Dutch Revolutionary Socialist Workers Party, the International African Service Buro, the Indo-Chinese Workers and Peasants Party, the Palestine Federation of Socialist Communes, the German "Neue Weg" Group, the Austrian "Funke" Group, and the French Party of Proletarian unity, most of which had not belonged to the London buro before 1938. At the same time, the Socialist Workers Party of Germany (SAP) was expelled "in view of divergence of policy."³¹

As *Workers Age* observed, "This involved organization has meant needless overlapping." Therefore, a third conference in Paris in April 1939 formally established the International Revolutionary Marxist Center which replaced

both the old London buro and the International Communist Opposition, and brought in sections not affiliated with either. Immediately after that meeting, the POUM, the Italian Socialist Party, the Greek Archeio-Marxist Communist Party, the ILP, the ILLA of America, the German Communist Party (Opposition), the Swedish Socialist Party, the Palestine Workers Party, "and a number of European and colonial groups" ratified their membership in the new center. Subsequently the French PSOP and the Dutch RSAP did the same.

At the founding congress of the International Revolutionary Marxist Center it was decided to hold a full-fledged world conference in October.³² However, the outbreak of World War II made it impossible to hold such a meeting. However, the International Revolutionary Marxist Center and the International Workers Front Against War continued to exist until the collapse of France to the Nazi invaders in May-June 1940. Soon after the outbreak of the war, the International Center issued "An Appeal to the Socialists of the World" which repeated the customary denunciations of the Second and Third Internationals and called for "uncompromising opposition to this war and to the war makers." The only innovation in the document was its complete repudiation of Stalin and the Soviet Union: "Socialism has nothing in common with Stalin and his gang, with the butcher of the Russian people, the destroyer of the Russian Revolution, now allied with Hitler, the butcher of the German people, the destroyer of German socialism."³³

The last three proclamations from the International Revolutionary Marxist Center and International Workers Front Against War were one on the occasion of the German invasion of Scandinavia, an appeal to the German working class, and a May Day 1940 manifesto. The last of these, the final document of the two groups, was remarkable for its consistency with the line which had been maintained for many years. It read:

MAY DAY 1916: Right in the face of the class enemy, during the imperialist war, Liebknecht courageously raises the banner of socialism and proletarian solidarity as a call to the workers of the whole world. And Zimmerwald prepares the way for October 1917—the ending of the war by revolution!

MAY DAY 1940: The unfinished task must be taken up again. Another imperialist war, born of the preceding one, is raging, is forcing the workers, because they have been unable to free themselves in time from the capitalist system, to slaughter each other for the profit of their exploiters.

Hitler, the butcher of the German peoples, has answered the injustices of Versailles with other and new injustices, with the oppression of the Austrian, Czecho-Slovakian and Polish peoples.

British imperialism and its French satellite claimed to be the defenders of democracy, but they oppress 500,000,000 subjects in their empires and are now extending an iron dictatorship over their own people.

Murder of the friends and co-workers of Lenin—responsible for the counter-

revolution in China, in Germany, in France and in Spain—Stalin has now allied himself with Hitler. . . .

And finally, in keeping with their betrayal of 1914-18, the "social-patriots" and the trade union bureaucrats [*sic*] find themselves once more in the service of the imperialist brigands in recruiting cannon-fodder and destroying working-class liberties.

MAY DAY 1940: The international proletariat will turn away with disgust from the reformist and Stalinist traitors in order the better to fight its class enemies—fascist demagogues or profit-made plutocrats.

MAY DAY 1940: Whether in uniform or in the factories, the exploited will revive the glorious tradition of the anti-war fights, of Karl Liebknecht, of Merrheim, of Rosa Luxemburg, of Keir Hardie, of Debs and Lenin.

Workers of the fascist countries! Arise against the clique of adventurers who aim to reduce the whole world to slavery!

British and French workers! Arise against your exploiting bankers who are dooming you to poverty and dictatorship!

Workers of the Soviet Union! Arise against your bureaucratic [*sic*] oppressors who are crushing you and bringing dishonor to communism!

American workers! Arise to keep your country out of war, to support your brothers in Europe, to win better standards of living from your own employing class.

Workers of the colonial countries! Arise to take advantage of the present opportunity to establish your social and political freedom.

Working people of all countries, workers and peasants, soldiers and sailors! You have no reason to hate or to kill each other. Your main enemy is at home. Stretch out your hands to each other and bring peace. Seize power. In spite of prisons and executions, in spite of betrayals and assassinations, FRATERNIZE!

Your movement will be a veritable blow aimed right at the heart of broken-down capitalism in its death-agony. It will finish off the tottering system of the totalitarian bureaucracies [*sic*].

MAY DAY 1940: Workers of all lands! Demonstrate against war! Unite in the struggle! FOR THE INTERNATIONAL SOCIALIST REVOLUTION!"³⁴

Within a little more than a month after this ringing proclamation was issued, the Nazis had overrun the Low Countries and France. In so doing, they put an effective end to the International Revolutionary Marxist Center, thereby putting an end, too, to the history of the International Communist Opposition.

Notes

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36. Ibid., p. 403.
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41. Interview with Charles S. Zimmerman in New York City, November 28, 1973.
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11. *Ibid.*
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30. *Ibid.*, November 26, 1938, p. 4.
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The bibliographical backbone of this book consists of the weekly newspapers of the United States Communist Opposition, *Revolutionary Age* and *Workers Age*. The reader will find many more references to them than to any other single source. They covered extensively the activities and ideas of the Lovestoneites and also kept track of the other affiliates of the International Communist Opposition and of the ICO itself.

However, many other sources have also been used. These include occasional publications of the American Opposition and the ICO containing documents and other materials, pamphlets published by the U.S. affiliate and some other groups belonging to or associated with the ICO, and publications of rival radical groups. A few books about one or another of the Communist Opposition groups or their leaders have been used, as well as books not principally concerned with the Communist Oppositionists, but containing more or less detailed information about them.

In seeking material for this volume, I have been in contact with a number of surviving leaders of the groups involved. Therefore, my sources include both letters from, and interviews with, such people. In a few instances I had had relevant correspondence or conversations with such individuals before I began to collect material specifically for the present study. The sources that follow are only ones which have been cited in this volume.

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About the Author

ROBERT J. ALEXANDER is Professor of Economics and Political Science at Rutgers University. He is the author of twenty-three books, including *The Tragedy of Chile* (Greenwood Press, 1978), and more than 700 articles.